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ALFRED DE MUSSET

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ALFRED DE MUSSET

BY

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WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS
EDINBURGH AND LONDON
MDCCCXC

1890

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CONTENTS.

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	HIS LIFE,	1
II.	POÉSIES,	46
III.	THE FOUR TRAGEDIES,	70
IV.	THE COMEDIES,	125
V.	THE PROSE WORKS,	180

ALFRED DE MUSSET.

CHAPTER I.

HIS LIFE.

ALFRED DE MUSSET was born on the 11th of December 1810, in Paris, in the centre of the most ancient part of the town, and it is curious to note that we owe him, not only in the same way as we may be said to owe many others, but as regards his very existence, to the French Revolution. His father was a younger son, destined, according to the family rules of the time, not to marry, and had therefore reconciled himself to the idea of going into the Church. The Revolution freed him from this resolve, and thus to it we owe one of the greatest of the many men of genius who have made the French language known and admired among us. Victor de Musset, the poet's father, after commencing his career with the doubtful exploit of aiding the escape of a condemned noble, rose eventually to a high position in the War Office of France, prior to which ev[illegible]

he had married a daughter of M. Desherbiers, who brought into the family—if the advocates of the theory of the hereditary transmission of qualities are to be believed—the sensitive feelings and eloquent language which had respectively distinguished her mother and father, and which afterwards showed so prominently in their grandson.

Of Alfred's childhood we have comparatively little record, except of the quaint utterances common, we believe, to every infant,—phrases which never get beyond the family circle if the child turns out eventually to be but as other children are, but which become at once historic if he develops into a historic character himself. Some of the young de Musset's sayings, however, are perfect: to take the first specimen that presents itself, he was very young when he was taken to church for the first time, and his remark on returning was—we cannot translate it,—"Maman, irons-nous encore Dimanche prochain, voir la comédie de la messe?" It is, as we have said, impossible properly to translate this childish question, of the Voltairian import of which the speaker was entirely unconscious, owing to the great difference —of which more anon—between the meanings of the English word "comedy" and the French *comédie;* but the *mot* speaks for itself. Another rather amusing anecdote is told of an incident which occurred when he was three years old, and had just got a pair of new red shoes, which he of course considered beautiful. Before he could go out in them, he had to submit to the operation of having his long curly hair combed out by his mother. All through the process he was quivering with impatience, and at last whimpered out—"Do

make haste, mamma; my new shoes will be getting old."

It has been said that Alfred de Musset was not a precocious child: we are rather curious to know upon what grounds this statement can be reconciled with the fact that he fell in love,—a love which lasted long as such, and, developing into friendship, endured much longer,—at the advanced age of four, or rather sooner? One day in 1814 a young lady came into the de Mussets' house whom Alfred did not know. She had tales to tell of the war, which had created considerable commotion even at far-off Liège, and the child, listening from a sofa, at last rose to ask his mother who this might be. He was told that she was his cousin Clélie, whereupon he rejoined at once, "She belongs to me." He then got possession of her, and, we can well suppose, victimised her as children are wont to do, ending his inflictions—also in accordance with the usual habits of his age—by asking her to marry him at once. Pressing the question so seriously as to show that he was really in earnest, he made her promise that so soon as he should be old enough, she would be his wife. One of the points which distinguish this first love of de Musset's from the baby loves of everyday life, is that this child at once set to work to learn to write, in order to be able to correspond with his betrothed, as he considered her, and when she had married, great precautions had to be taken to keep the fact a secret from him. Even when much older, when he first found out and appreciated the truth, he long doubted whether it was possible that Clélie could have played him false. The anecdote may seem trivial, but the lights which it throws upon the subsequent

events of the poet's life are most important. We find the same impulsive sensitive mind in the boy of four years old, as afterwards led the man to take the most disastrous step of his whole life; while in the careful measures taken by his family not to disturb his illusion, we discover the beginning of the respect for everything which he, whom they soon recognised as a genius, might choose to think or do, which was afterwards one of the chief causes of his ruin. This youthful attachment, however, was useful to the family later on. Clélie, now Madame Moulin, had some difficult relations with the de Mussets which threatened to end in legal proceedings. Alfred heard of this, and started off at once for Clermont, his cousin's residence: he went in to her suddenly, a meeting ensued at which both were considerably moved, but nothing more was heard of the lawsuit, and the good feeling between the families was never again disturbed. Many years later, the same Clélie, who must then have been verging upon old age, was present at Alfred's admission to the Academy—and this appears to have been the last time that de Musset ever met his first love.

The next years of his life are uneventful but instructive: the boy was much as other boys are, now with violent opinions upon the political questions of the day, now carried out of himself by the mystic charms of the 'Arabian Nights,' now rushing about with healthy boyish activity in the garden at Les Cliquets; but it subsequently appeared that, even at this early age, nothing could escape the quick and retentive mind which was already unconsciously beginning to gather up materials for its future work. The most remarkable feature of

his younger days, as recorded by his brother, in whose company they were spent, is the extraordinary effect produced upon both boys' minds by the first works of romantic chivalry that fell into their hands. Both the brothers, and especially Alfred, were entirely carried away by the romances of Amadis, Roland, and other heroes of chivalry, living a sort of imaginary life among these personages, and carrying the infatuation so far as to continue their game of assuming the various characters even in the schoolroom. Perhaps the curious point of all in connection with this phase of de Musset's character, is the fact that just as the heat and fervour of this infantine age of chivalry began to yield a little to the light of common day, 'Don Quixote' fell into his hands, and was read by the brothers with an enthusiasm almost equal to that which had made them for years enact the parts of Roland and of Amadis; and that, while still a schoolboy, he could follow the aims and objects of that most marvellous of works, and, while recognising the extravagance of his earlier heroes, never forgot the noble and poetic spirit which breathes through all the humours of the last of the knights-errant.

A French boy's school-days have not the happy recollections that make that period one of the brightest of life to an Englishman, but Alfred's career at school was one of almost unbroken success. When, however, his studies there were ended, the boy found the choice of a profession, which in the experiences of a French youth immediately follows, to be wellnigh impossible. "Repelled by the dryness of law," says his brother, "he attempted the study of medicine;" but his first trial

of the dissecting-room filled him with insurmountable disgust. To discover that he had no taste for either of the two professions most in favour with his contemporaries, filled him with despair. "I shall never be good for anything," he exclaimed, when his brother inquired into the cause of his melancholy—"I shall never be fit for any profession." It gave him a little consolation to find that he succeeded in his study of Art, and that in the opinion of his master he might, if he chose, one day become a painter. But in the meantime, another faculty began to appear, to which neither he nor his family seem to have attached much importance at first. In the spring of 1828, when he had reached the age of eighteen, the family removed for the summer to Auteuil; and in his walks to and fro to Paris, to the studio where he was working, the youth began to find his voice. His companion on these lonely walks was often a little volume of André Chenier, then his favourite poet; and his first composition took the form of an elegy upon the fall of a maiden of Athens destined by her father to be a priestess of Diana, and the anger and vengeance of the affronted goddess,—a poem of not less than a hundred lines, which was finished in two days, or rather in two walks, entirely in the spirit and according to the inspiration of the classical school to which André Chenier belonged. The struggle between the classical and romantic schools was then at its height; and between the production of this first poem (never printed) and that which followed it, a change had come o'er the spirit of his dream. He had been introduced by his friend Paul Foucher to the house and society of Victor Hugo, the famous dramatist, and found himself

there in the inspiring company of all the rising geniuses of the time. Victor Hugo had by this time published his 'Cromwell,' and the celebrated preface to this play had opened the eyes of the rising generation to a new and noble path of poetry, far different from the well-worn ways of classical tradition. Hugo, in 'Cromwell,' claimed to originate a new plan of action: his own words to Talma, who was, if he had lived, to have been the first representative of the part of Cromwell, explains that his dream was to substitute "drama for tragedy, living men for characters, truth for conventionality." His intention was to replace in the drama the heroic by the actual, and to carry on the action—and on this Talma laid great stress—without any declamations or specially striking bits of versification. The stage-goers, accustomed to the classic or heroic subjects of the tragedies of Corneille and Racine, and the "tall talk" in which they occasionally made their heroes indulge, were naturally rather shocked by the appearance of a play built on these lines—though, oddly enough, nothing in the famous preface is so much abused by at least one contemporary critic, as the praise of Shakespeare which it contains. But the younger generation met the new idea with enthusiasm, and eagerly accepted the novel doctrine which emancipated their minds from the trammels and traditions of the old school, and called upon them to describe men as they lived before their eyes.

The first of de Musset's poems which was actually published appeared in a little newspaper in Dijon, called 'Le Provincial.' It was a little poem called "Un Rêve," and appeared under circumstances some-

what amusing, prefaced by a few words from a sub-editor apologising to his readers for sending them a piece of verse so highly romantic in style. The chief editor of the paper, however, added at the end of the poem a note declaring that this preface was not his, and that he had no excuses to make for so charming a poem. Thus, between apology and praise, the young poet very characteristically made his first appearance in the world.

Just at the close of the year 1829, the author being then only nineteen years of age, appeared the first volume that he gave to the public, entitled 'Contes d'Espagne et d'Italie,' a collection of poems most of which had been composed for, and read or recited to, a small literary society which, Paul de Musset tells us, gave a kindly acceptance to everything but a classical work. "Portia," "Mardoche," and "Don Paez" are the best known of the separate items which made up this volume; while among the rest, the celebrated "Ballade à la Lune" gave piquancy to a work which established for its author a reputation which many critics of the time feared would not be kept up. The first stanza of the "Ballade," though it is perhaps as well known as it is untranslatable, is worth attempting, if only as the subject of a comical incident:—

"In the grey night and chill
The moon o'er the old spire high
Stood still,
Like a dot o'er an *i*."

This undignified expression some years later very nearly caused the ruin of de Musset's prospects,—a public offi-

cial, to whom he had been recommended, and who probably knew very little, and understood less, of the young poet's works, being only hindered in his desire to befriend him by "some dot over an *i*," which he seemed to consider an expression dangerous to public morality. But the 'Contes d'Espagne' gained de Musset the support and sympathy of the section of the public which, his brother says, he wished most to please—the women and the young. The former of these classes, indeed, he had already succeeded in pleasing: handsome in person, and, when in the right mood, fascinating in manner and conversation, he was eminently calculated to please; and it may perhaps have been to some extent the consciousness of these advantages, combined with the unvarying deference paid to his caprices at home, that made him so easy a victim to any woman who thought it would please her fancy or her vanity to have him at her feet. Even in 1828, when his first considerable work had not yet been given to the world, Prosper Chalas, a journalist of some experience, warned Paul de Musset that, though his brother was beyond doubt destined to become a great poet, yet he feared for him the "Delilahs." Paul's reading of his brother's life is, that the "Delilahs" made their appearance, but only made the poet still greater. We, looking back upon his life with perhaps less prejudice, may be inclined to think that the omission of one or two episodes in connection with this class might possibly have left the poet as great, while increasing our respect for the man.

Much as the 'Contes d'Espagne' was opposed to the ideas of the classical school in France, the next efforts of de Musset were even more repugnant to its opponents.

A serious mood seems to have come over his somewhat changeable mind, and while the classicists were still scoffing at "the dot o'er an *i*," the romantic school found that in the 'Pensées de Rafaël' the author of the 'Contes' was deserting his party. The worst result of this was, that when, at the end of 1830, de Musset first tried to put a work on the stage, his isolated position between the two parties left him without the support of either. "La Nuit Vénitienne," his first dramatic essay, though strongly "cast" at the Odéon, was hissed loudly on two consecutive evenings, and de Musset had not the courage to tempt fortune and the adverse *badauds* of Paris a third time. He was still extremely young, however, when this first touch of fame gave force to his caprices and assurance to his youthful self-will and independence. He flung himself into the seething life of Paris with the careless and reckless *abandon* which he afterwards analysed, rather than chronicled, in the 'Confessions d'un Enfant du Siècle.' Attracted by every vagary of fashion, as his brother informs us, and seeking pleasure in every form, neither his health nor his genius suffered by what would have spoiled both the constitution and mind of men less happily endowed. "He had a constitution of iron, a mental activity almost incredible; he would often compose a poem of fifty lines after a joyous supper. That which for many would have been excess, for him was simply exercise." These brotherly excuses do not, however, veil the fact that the young Alfred prepared himself for that excessive empire of the emotions which devastated his after-life, by yielding to every impulse in this beginning of his career. Contemporary authors

afford us pictures of an astonishing young exquisite, clothed in the multiplicity of brilliant waistcoats which were one of the fashions of the time, with curling locks and delicate waist, the very D'Orsay of poets. His prudent brother did not fail to remind him of the "redoubtable day when the tailor would present his bill for so many fine clothes," along with other still more grave dangers of his reckless life; but his plea that it was necessary for him to know everything and to learn by experience, not by hearsay, seems to have been received as a more or less reasonable apology for all disorders. And he had from time to time "melancholy to-morrow mornings full of regrets," in which he posed with a comical self-consciousness as follows:—

"For these days of wretchedness the poet wanted an appropriate costume. From the depths of his wardrobe he produced an old yellow greatcoat with collar, three times too large for him; and thus travestied, threw himself down upon the carpet of his room, humming a lamentable old air, contemporary with his old coat. When I found him in this penitential costume, and in a most melodramatic attitude, I knew that the cards had not been favourable. 'Leave me,' he cried, covering his face, when I attempted to speak to him,—'leave me in my rags and my despair!'"

There are one or two characteristic circumstances connected with the publication of the 'Contes d'Espagne.' Its immediate cause was a terrible announcement of the father of the family, that he had found a situation for the young poet. Of all men in the world, this fantastic, extravagant youth was the last to have what his brother calls *le boulet de la bureaucratie* attached to his foot; and in his despair he carried to the printer the verses

which had already gained various little social successes. They were accepted, but were not sufficient in amount for a volume, and the poem of "Mardoche," six hundred lines in length, was hurriedly added to bring the "copy" to the proper length,—an experience that recurred on after occasions. The success of the little volume gained for him his much-desired freedom.

In the meantime a curious episode—one of those which seem to have constantly occurred to de Musset, and which are perhaps recorded more particularly because they occurred to him—gained him an acquaintance which grew into a lifelong friendship. The Duchesse de Castries, wishing to read the 'Contes d'Espagne,' asked her companion, an English girl, to buy the book for her, whereupon the girl, not knowing what to do, wrote to the poet for a copy. A most characteristic answer followed, to the effect that the writer, assuming his correspondent possessed the charms which distinguished all English ladies, claimed the right to present the volume in person. The companion confided her difficult position to the duchess, who cut the knot by receiving de Musset herself, and insisting that before he introduced himself to the young Englishwoman, he should make acquaintance with herself. In this curious way commenced a friendship which lasted for life.

After this first success the poet rested for some time upon his youthful laurels. The poems of the next years,—those in which, as his biographer says, he "asked pardon of his mother-tongue for having sometimes offended her" (by such vagaries as the *point sur un i*),—and in which he made some return to the greater stateliness of classical diction, were published in the 'Revue

de Paris,' and not in any separate form. The *fiasco* of the 'Nuit Vénitienne,' already referred to, occurred in 1830, and that experience did not tend to foster the young author's ambition for the stage—the ambition of all young Frenchmen, especially in his day. But the dramatic form was dear to him, and his next volume, called 'Un Spectacle dans un Fauteuil,' comprised two short plays, intended for the reader rather than the playgoer—"La Coupe et les Lèvres," and "À quoi rêvent les Jeunes Filles." These, it turned out, were not sufficient even for the smallest independent volume, and once more the poet had to go to work hastily to make up the quantity required. This rapid effort produced "Namouna," a powerful but not agreeable work, composed in an incredibly short space of time. A curious story is told of the manner in which it was received by the critics. De Musset had invited a number of his friends to a reading of the book just before its publication.

"The audience was composed of the same persons who, three years before, had applauded the 'Contes d'Espagne.' But what a difference! The reading was heard to the end in dead silence. Was it admiration, astonishment, or dissatisfaction? I know not. At all events, their reception was icy. The consternation of the publisher was great. M. Mérimée alone whispered to the author, 'You have made enormous progress.'"

M. Sainte-Beuve also gave in these discouraging circumstances the comfort of his applause. In a notice published in the 'Revue des Deux Mondes,' he declared that there were lines in these poems such as many meritorious writers whose poetical gifts had carried them to the Academy had never equalled. With two such

critics in his favour, de Musset might well be indifferent to the opinion of lesser men.

The following year, 1833, was made remarkable by the production of two of the poet's greatest works, the very tragical *comédies* of 'André del Sarto' and 'Les Caprices de Marianne,' which made their appearance within six weeks of each other. Both are treated of in a later chapter, but an anecdote concerning the latter is worth quoting here. In the discussion between Marianne and Octave, de Musset, in his own heart sympathising with the latter, found himself entirely beaten by the arguments he had put into the mouth of Marianne. "It cannot be," he said, "that I could let this little prude beat me!" and after a good deal of thought, out came from the wounded feelings, not of the author but the man, the triumphant answer of Octave. Another point that may be noticed about the same play is de Musset's response to a question addressed to him as to where he had found the character of Marianne. "Nowhere and everywhere," was his answer; "she is not a woman, she is woman."

Both these works appeared in the 'Revue des Deux Mondes,' the pages of which had been thrown open to him at first with a little hesitation; but, as may be easily supposed, after such contributions this was of very short duration. Very shortly after, another poem appeared there which set the whole literary world of Paris on fire. He had recited one morning during the summer, at a meeting of friends among whom was Sainte-Beuve, the beginning of 'Rolla,' and it had been received "*avec transports de joie.*" Its effect upon the general public was equally remarkable. To the

English reader, the situation in which the poet places his hero at the supreme moment of his life will always be revolting, and few, whatever their opinion, will read 'Rolla' without feeling how much this inherent fault detracts from its effect; but none who read it at all will do so without the profoundest admiration. It placed its author at once in the first rank of French poets. At the same time—such is the two-sided nature of all human events—it led to the greatest disaster of his life. It was as the author of 'Rolla' that de Musset was invited to a banquet given by the administration of the 'Revue des Deux Mondes,' among the contributors to which he had now taken a distinguished rank. Among the many notable men present, there was one lady. This was the woman whose name has been more associated with his life than any other, and whose influence upon it, though possibly exaggerated by his brother, was of the greatest importance. Being, as she was, one of the greatest literary celebrities of her time, it is hardly necessary here to attempt any lengthened description or estimate of George Sand. She was in the height of her genius and charm, beautiful as well as distinguished, living at Paris rather as a young literary man than woman, *bon camarade* to begin with, whatever might follow. She was, as we have said, one of the chief personages of the day; but 'Rolla' had raised de Musset to sufficient celebrity to give him interest in her eyes. She was six years older than he, a woman of infinite caprice, yet of a natural individuality of character and strong self-will, which gave her many advantages over the sensitive poet. He soon became a *habitué* of her house, and one of the chief of her joyous com-

panions. "The wildest gaiety reigned there," says his brother. "I have never seen society so light-hearted, so little occupied with the rest of the world." Conversation, music, masquerades, and mystifications were the order of the day. Amid all these Alfred took his part, till among their many subjects of conversation there arose some suggestion of a tour to Italy together. "The talk," says Paul de Musset, "became presently a plan, the plan a resolution, and the only thing which could possibly, as it seemed, prevent it from becoming an accomplished fact was the opposition of the young man's mother." And this proved hard to overcome: more than once she declared in the most emphatic way that if her son did insist on starting on a journey which she considered dangerous and unprofitable, he would do so against her earnest wishes. Strange as it may seem, it was for her son's physical health that she was chiefly anxious. After Alfred had been induced by her opposition to countermand the preparations already made for his departure, and to give up his plans with the deepest disappointment, a curious incident occurred. In the evening when the mother, perhaps half repenting the victory which cost her son so dear, was sitting by her fireside, she received a message that a lady in a carriage at the door earnestly desired to speak to her. Mme. de Musset went down-stairs in answer to the appeal, and the unknown lady disclosed her name and purpose. She had come to plead with the mother for the permission refused to the son, undertaking, "not only with promises, but with oaths," to take the place of a mother to her young companion, and to watch over him. Such a scene seems almost incredible to the sober

English reader, but it is evident that between the two women at least there was no thought of anything beyond a travelling companionship. "She must have been eloquent indeed," says Paul de Musset, "for she succeeded in her aim. The permission was yielded, and the pair set out for Italy."

For some time the young man's letters were cheerful and full of delight in the beauty and novelty around him, but after a time this consolation failed, and long silence alternated with a few broken lines full of trouble. When their anxiety had become unbearable, and they were about to set out to seek him, the family received a letter announcing his partial recovery from an illness, his intention of coming home as soon as his health made it possible for him to travel, and that he would bring them "a body in ill health, a soul in despair, a heart bleeding and broken, but still loving you." The body took long to recover, the spirit yet longer; he buried himself in his room, never appearing but in the evening, when one of the few things that for a long time could draw him from his sadness was music, his young sister playing the David to this youthful Saul. At last his brother and his friend Tattet were allowed to visit him in his retirement, where they found a wrecked being, only showing his own nature in his efforts, like a true gentleman, to contradict the gossip now floating round Paris, and detrimental to the lady whom he had left behind him in Italy. For a strangely protracted period he remained brooding over his misery, a prey to the *attaques de nerfs* which we scarcely associate with the sufferings of a man, however sensitive. The work which first showed that his genius had survived this

catastrophe was of a character very appropriate, both in its profound feeling and its fantastic form, to such a sick and suffering spirit. The outline of the story of Camille and Perdican had been in de Musset's mind for some time, but it is difficult to believe that the heartrending play, 'On ne badine pas avec l'Amour,' does not owe a good deal of its tragedy to the recent experiences of the poet. Bravely as he denied it, there can be little doubt that he was exceptionally qualified to deal with this theme. It was not, however, until 1835, when Mdme. Sand had returned to Paris, that a quarrel between them resulted in an absolute breach, and the termination of a connection not particularly creditable to either party, and which has given rise to endless recriminating charges on both sides. With this rupture de Musset's settled melancholy seems to have been cured; he no longer brooded over the sorrows connected with a time which could now never return.

At one incident of this miserable period it is difficult not to smile. The broken-hearted and abandoned lover, shut up in his room, and giving himself up to his misery, in his disgust with everything emptied his shelves of all his books save a few classics, and taking down the prints that decorated his walls, threw them into the fire. The frames hung for a long time empty on the walls; Alfred was still the same passionate yet fantastic boy who invented a costume for his despair, when he had lost his pocket-money or suffered in his vanity. And indeed even in this stage of advanced development he was not yet much past the age of boyhood.

A period of great literary activity followed, work following work with a rapidity which proved that the

sufferings which the young author had passed through had taken away none of the marvellous activity of his brain. 'Lucie,' 'La Nuit de Mai,' 'Barberine,' 'Le Chandelier,' 'La Loi sur la Presse,' 'La Nuit de Décembre,' and, last but not least, 'La Confession d'un Enfant du Siècle,' were the fruit of one extraordinary year, there being something almost feverish in the fits of activity which alternated with intervals of listlessness and *ennui*. Perhaps the recovery was not so complete as the poet himself seems to have thought, and it may be doubtful whether his mind ever really regained what we might call a state of stable equilibrium.

The composition of the famous 'Nuits' was a new departure in de Musset's career, and his brother's account of his manner of work when the inspiration seized him is full of interest:—

"One spring, on returning from a walk, Alfred recited to me the two first couplets of a dialogue between the Muse and the Poet which he had just composed under the chestnuts of the Tuileries. He worked without interruption till morning. When he appeared at breakfast, I saw on his face no sign of fatigue. He had, like his own Fantasio, the month of May on his cheeks. The Muse possessed him. During the entire day he kept up his work and the ordinary domestic intercourse together, like the chess-players who play two games at once. Now and then he left us to go and write a dozen lines. But in the evening he returned to his composition as to a love-tryst. A little supper was served him in his room, at which he would have two places laid, one for the Muse. All the lights in the house were collected round him; he lit twelve candles. The neighbours seeing this illumination, might suppose that he was giving a ball. In the morning of the second day, the poem being finished, the Muse took wing, but not without a promise of speedy

return. The poet blew out the candles, lay down, and slept till evening. When he awoke he re-read his verses, and found scarcely anything to correct."

He seems to have continued these ceremonies of welcome to the Muse during the whole of his subsequent career. When the anxious brother saw a glare of unusual light under Alfred's door, he knew that the celestial visitor had arrived. There is something both childish and touching in these accessories of the poet's work. They remind one of the *grande tenue* in which some great commanders had gone into battle. It was a real love-tryst which de Musset had with the inspiring influence, and he arranged it in the way approved by his country and kind.

When he comes to less ethereal loves, however, it is a little disappointing to find that his connection with George Sand, though of so much importance in his life, did not hinder him from finding, and that at no great interval of time, another love, which also ended unhappily. It is with regret that we acknowledge that the famous 'Letter to Lamartine,' so full of the deepest and most heartrending emotion, was not due to the first but to a second disappointment and desertion. The deep depression which followed the rupture of the second tie, and which was scarcely less profound than the first, was followed by one of the moods in which his genius found most effective utterance. Few of de Musset's poems ever quite attained the high poetic level of this address to the elder poet, whose 'Méditations,' taken up by chance in the deepest moment of gloom, had produced a soothing effect upon Alfred's troubled spirit, and diverted his thoughts into

this vein of expression. Apart from this accidental circumstance, however, Lamartine had always been the object of de Musset's most earnest admiration, and few poets in any age can boast of any more splendid tribute to their genius. It is not perhaps surprising that the poet, thus addressed, in acknowledging the receipt of the *Lettre*, asked for time to compose a suitable answer. The outpouring of Alfred's fervid soul, instinct with youth and despair, must indeed have been a difficult thing to answer in cold blood and middle age. The younger poet was excited and consoled by the expectation of this promised response; but it never came—a failure at which we cannot wonder. The composition itself was no doubt de Musset's best medicine, and we find him soon after returning to the delights of society, and recovering his pleasure in them.

Luckily this time he was under happier guidance, and in his second revival gained, not another false love, but a constant and invaluable friend. One of the most agreeable *salons* in Paris at this time was that of the young Mme. Jaubert, where, whether for music or conversation, some of the most distinguished *dilettanti* of the time used frequently to assemble, and of these gatherings Alfred soon became an assiduous and valued frequenter. Among other amusements, one night the *coterie* were devising fantastic names for each other, and the mistress of the house constituted herself the godmother of de Musset, bestowing upon him the title of the Prince Phosphore de Cœur Volant. We are not told whether the name clung to him for any time, but the supposed relationship lasted long, as the lady remained his *marraine* until the later years of his life,

when the possession of a true and unselfish friend proved of the greatest service to him. Another episode of this period is of a less agreeable character, though it furnished the poet with material for one of the most charming of the *Nouvelles*, the story of 'Frédéric et Bernerette.' Like the hero of that tale, de Musset was one day looking aimlessly out of his window when he chanced to see a pretty young *grisette* looking from an opposite casement. The girl smiled, the young man bowed; the same programme was repeated for some days. They met shortly after accidentally, in the street, and the acquaintance thus begun soon ripened into one of those intimacies which are so lightly thought of in such circumstances and surroundings. De Musset made an attempt early to break this entanglement, going down to a small country-house belonging to his friend Tattet to escape from it. But the connection brought him poetical advantages at least, enabling him to study at first hand the essentially real traits of character of which he made use in the after-pictures of Bernerette and Mimi Pinson—a somewhat cold-blooded expedient. He returned from the country, however, after this escapade, in renewed health and spirits, looking like his old self. His brother tells us how, one day, after pacing restlessly up and down his room for some time, he at last stopped in front of his writing-desk, drew out a large sheet of paper, and began to write—

"THE NIGHT OF JUNE.

The Poet. My Muse, the corn is sprouting—let's be gay;
Look on these slopes clad in their fairest shades;
How sweet the light that this vast scene pervades,—
All must be happy that has life to-day."

"At last," cried Paul, as he read these lines, "we are going to get one of these 'Nights' which will not make us feel death in our hearts!" His brother laughed, and promised that the 'Night of June' should treat of nothing but joy and love; but, alas! at that moment Tattet came in and carried the poet off to a dinner-party. The next day the inspiration was gone. Years afterwards, while arranging his materials for Alfred de Musset's life, his brother came upon this sheet of paper grown yellow with age, and containing but these four lines, and could hardly persuade himself of the truth that the page was never to be completed.

Of de Musset's return to more orderly habits we have a curious story told. One morning he awoke to the idea that he had been indulging in quite enough dissipation: forthwith, with the quaint impulse which ever distinguished him, he put on his dressing-gown, seated himself in his arm-chair, and read himself a severe lecture; then, faithful to his usual instincts, proceeded to transfer this lecture to paper, the result of the whole process being the delightful comedy of 'Il ne faut jurer de rien,' in which de Musset's self-inflicted rebukes find a place as administered by Van Buck to his nephew Valentin.

With the reform thus inaugurated came increased powers: never perhaps did de Musset write anything more charming than 'La Nuit d'Août,' which was the next production of this period of his life. Another work of the same time, which will endure as long as the French language, was due to a melancholy cause. Alfred de Musset had always been a most devoted admirer of the great *prima donna*, Mme. Malibran, though the admiration, according to his brother, was always

from a distance, the poet never having even spoken to the *diva*. The close of this year, 1836, brought to Paris the news of Mme. Malibran's death, an event everywhere deplored, and which drew from de Musset the celebrated stanzas which show how deeply the untimely end of a woman, personally unknown to him, but whose genius he wellnigh worshipped, could affect this sensitive soul. The same year affords us an amusing anecdote which shows that in some high quarters at least there existed an atmosphere somewhat unfavourable for a young poet lacking advancement. In the winter of 1836 Louis Philippe for the fourth time had a narrow escape from assassination, and de Musset, for his own pleasure, and with no view of publication, wrote the sonnet on the subject which is now published under the title, "Au Roi, après l'attentat de Meunier." Tattet obtained a copy, which passed from hand to hand until it reached the Duc d'Orléans, who was enchanted with the verses, and, one day when de Musset was at the Tuileries, undertook to show them to the king, telling the poet to wait for him. The duke shortly returned, looking so much disconcerted that de Musset guessed at once that his lines had not given satisfaction to the king, and after a few minutes of mutual embarrassment he asked timidly what objections his Majesty had made. The duke confessed with a blush that the king did not like "the familiarity and the *tutoiement*" in the verses. "I should never have thought of that objection," was the poor poet's only reply. It was some time before de Musset got over this abrupt revelation of the king's indifference to poetry.

Alfred de Musset had now made his mark in almost

every style of literary composition, but he had never yet written a story, as the word is generally understood. In the beginning of this year he resolved upon a series of *Nouvelles*. There can be little doubt that the study of Boccaccio, always a favourite of his, had a great deal to do with this resolution; in fact, it is easy to understand that it would be almost impossible for a young man, studying with intense admiration the great Italian *conteur*, and feeling within himself the power to follow, if such his will, in the same path, not to be carried away by the desire to endeavour at least to emulate the king of story-tellers on his own ground. 'Emmeline,' the first of the series, was already begun when the enterprise was put off for a short time by a truly characteristic change of purpose. While meditating the first of the *Nouvelles*, he received one day a netted purse from an unknown donor. This trivial incident turned the current of thought at once, and 'Emmeline' was laid aside until the mystery of the purse had been developed into the little comedy of 'Un Caprice.' This purse, by the way, appears to have made a great impression upon de Musset, as we meet with it again next year in the 'Fils du Titien.' 'Un Caprice' being finished, and having, strange to say, been received by the literary world with a somewhat discouraging silence, 'Emmeline' was soon in the printer's hands; shortly afterwards followed, at the urgent request of the editor of the 'Revue des Deux Mondes,' in which most of de Musset's lighter works made their first appearance, by the second of the *Nouvelles*, 'Les Deux Maîtresses,' in which the author is said to have essayed a portrait of himself in the character of Valentin. Even while actually engaged in this prose work, however,

de Musset could not keep his thoughts from wandering towards the more familiar realm of poetry: in fact, he himself used to say that the two carried on together, really helped each other. To use his own words, it was as when one concentrates one's gaze upon one star, so as better to observe the twinkling of the next. It was during the composition of the 'Deux Maîtresses' that the idea struck him of writing a sequel or complement to 'La Nuit de Mai': as usual, the prose went to the wall, and 'La Nuit d'Octobre' appeared in the 'Revue' before the story, which, however, was published in the next number.

History, it is said, is constantly repeating itself; and in strict accordance with the saying, an analysis of de Musset's literary career must of necessity involve a series of repetitions. The circumstances attending the production of the next of the *Nouvelles* were in almost every respect identical with those in which 'Les Deux Maîtresses' was elaborated. The composition of these slight prose stories seems to have been so easy to de Musset that, even while working at them, he could allow his thoughts to stray to whatever subject chanced at the time to be uppermost in his mind. Looking back upon the many experiences of his life—experiences so numerous and so varied that we find it hard to realise the fact that the poet was only in his twenty-eighth year—for a fitting subject for a fresh *Nouvelle*, he thought of Bernerette, the joyous companion of his hours of idleness and pleasure. Young as he was as a story-teller, his dramatic instinct warned him that the true relation of the actual connection between himself and the *grisette* would, apart from all moral considera-

tions, then, as now, of somewhat secondary importance in light French literature, be hardly sufficient to keep up the interest of a story, or to enlist the sympathies of the reader on the side of the erring heroine. To remedy this deficiency, the obvious resource was the early death of the fictitious Bernerette: but the mere conception of this early death set the poet thinking. For the moment, Bernerette, her gaiety and her sorrows, were forgotten in the great and serious questions which occupied and perplexed his mind. The end, the object of life, was his problem, which he vainly endeavoured to solve by hard and earnest reading of the philosophers, ancient and modern, who had ventured to deal with this vast subject. The story was continued all the same in the intervals of this study, and each time that de Musset laid down his work in despair at finding nothing to satisfy his doubts, he went back to Bernerette—the Bernerette of the story, be it understood. At last when it was ended, his mind was made up. "I have read enough," he said to his brother; "I have searched enough, observed enough. Sorrow and prayer are of the essence of God, —God has given us the power of mourning, and since our tears come from Him, it is to Him that our prayers must return." The words are more, at least to us, than the solemn expression of a profound conviction: they are the text upon which was constructed the 'Espoir en Dieu.'

That the next of the *Nouvelles* was not disturbed or interrupted as the previous ones had been, is perhaps due to the fact that it is a work upon which de Musset bestowed more than usual care, based upon a story which had particularly interested him. While reading the

histories of the Italian painters to find materials for his play of 'André del Sarto,' he had chanced upon a story which pleased him much, and of which he made a note at once, without, we may presume, losing much time in ascertaining its historical value. From this tradition it appeared that Titian had left a son, who only painted one picture—the portrait of his mistress; and though that picture was a masterpiece, could never be induced to paint another. On this story de Musset exercised all his powers, and was, we are told, himself perfectly satisfied with the result. He even went so far as to compose two original sonnets as the work of his hero, so as to increase the genius which he wished to make a characteristic of the 'Fils du Titien.' In fact, he so completely identified himself with the hero of his story that, though he did not, like him, relinquish work altogether, he rewarded himself for the production of this tale with six weeks' undisturbed idleness.

The rest of this year is rather barren in literary fruit. The story of 'Margot,' evolved from de Musset's recollections of his early days at the farm of Les Cliquets, combined with the scanty reminiscences of her childhood which he succeeded in drawing from a young country girl brought up to Paris as a servant by a neighbour of his, was the only addition to the *Nouvelles;* while the list of his poetical works was only increased by the satirical idyll of 'Dupont et Durand,' and the ode upon the birth of the Comte de Paris, which brought him once more into communication with his old schoolfellow the Duc d'Orléans, and was of service to him at a later period. But the really absorbing interest of the moment, and that upon which de Musset ex-

pended all his energy, was the task of encouraging and helping with his most enthusiastic efforts the *débuts* of two young *artistes*, Mlles. Pauline Garcia and Rachel, —"children beloved of heaven," as he styles them in a well-known article published in the 'Revue.' We have alluded in a former page to de Musset's great admiration for Mme. Malibran. We can therefore judge of the effect produced upon him by these two *débutantes*, one the sister and successor of the object of his enthusiasm, the other of even greater powers. His exclamation on first seeing Rachel act, shows how he associated the two together. He had already recognised in Pauline Garcia a fitting successor to Malibran, and the *début* of Rachel drew from him the exclamation, "We have not one but two Malibrans, and Pauline Garcia has a sister!" Rachel's return to the old classic school of Corneille and Racine naturally created rather a panic in the ranks of the supporters of the new so-called romantic drama, and raised in some quarters a storm of hostile criticism. De Musset, himself as far removed as anybody from the classic tradition, yet throughout all this opposition strenuously undertook her defence; his admiration for genius being far above such petty considerations as the quarrel between the two schools—a zeal which subjected him to the insult of being contemptuously alluded to in the columns of one of the hostile journals, the 'Débats,' as a third-class poet. The first of these "children" of genius had *everything* in her favour to start with,—the name of Garcia being already famous; but Rachel had to make her own mark, and in this task—always a difficult one, and still more so for a young girl endeavouring to bring back into popular favour a dis-

carded and unpopular style of drama—de Musset gave her most loyal and unceasing support.

The only personal incident affecting our poet in 1838 that requires notice is his appointment to the post of librarian at the French Home Office,—in the negotiations for which occurred the incident concerning the "dot over an *i*," which has been already alluded to. It took actually six weeks to overcome the Minister's objections to this apparently harmless expression, which he is said to have considered a revolutionary expression; but at the end the influence of the Duc d'Orléans carried the day.

With the beginning of the year 1839, de Musset resolved—a resolution which was, fortunately, not carried out—to write no more prose. His argument, a sufficiently plausible one, for this determination was that any one could write a prose love-story in some way or other; but as he happened to possess the gift of writing in a language which was not common to all the rest of the world, it was his duty to make use of it. The occasion of this sudden resolve was the finishing of the story of 'Croisilles,' in the abrupt termination of which we can trace the fact that the writer was becoming tired of prose composition, which indeed had never, as we have seen, been able to occupy the whole of his mind. The two ladies whom he admired and followed with an artist's love of artistic perfection were here the examples he elected to follow. "Pauline Garcia," he said, "would never perform at the Opéra Comique, Rachel could not rant in melodrama; I, like them, must follow my own course." The interval of literary inactivity thus secured was spent in assiduous efforts to encourage and assist,

now by advice, now by the personal attendance so well described by the French language as *assistance*, the career of Pauline Garcia and Rachel. His momentary distaste for work increased with these new interests, and neither the representations of the brother who watched over him with unfailing care, nor the arguments of the editor of the 'Revue des Deux Mondes,' nor even the pressure of pecuniary distress, had any effect upon his capricious resolve. "I have laid no egg, and I will lay none, oh Bonnaire!" became his habitual response to the anxious editor; and he reproached his brother with the desire to make of him a *prosateur galérien*, a slave of the press. To make matters worse, the casual perusal of a newspaper *feuilleton* of the day filled him with passionate disgust at the corruption of the public taste. "Don't you see," he cried, "that this chambermaid's literature will bring out of the earth a new world of ignorant and semi-barbarous readers? It will no doubt destroy itself by its own excess; but first it will disgust all delicate spirits with reading. Meanwhile I renounce it; henceforward there shall be nothing in common between it and me, not even the implement. I will not again touch a pen. Thank heaven, one can write a verse with a bit of chalk or the end of a burnt match!"

Fantastic as the resolution was, we can easily understand and sympathise with the disgust of the poet. The effects of the *feuilleton* on French romance has fulfilled his worst anticipations.

To this revolt against all the circumstances of his life there succeeded one of those periods of profound depression with which all who knew De Musset familiarly were well acquainted, and the equally familiar episode

of an unfortunate love-affair was again, to some extent, the cause of this depression. Nothing, however, is more curious in this most curious of lives than the reaction which constantly brought de Musset back to work after these recurring fits of dissipation and despondency. It is on this point alone that the poet's brother can base any claim to truth for the statement we have mentioned before, that the "Delilahs" so much dreaded for Alfred had only made him greater. Each period of disappointment and depression had hitherto been followed by a corresponding period of activity, the impulse towards active work still holding a certain balance in that changeable though powerful mind. But it was not always a sane or sober impulse,—it came too soon to be of much practical benefit to the public or to posterity; and on this occasion it did not take the form of the steady action of the mind restored to its original power, so much as that of feverish activity resulting from a sudden sense of restored energy. The result was not the first, though perhaps the most disappointing, example of de Musset's fitful habit of commencing, and even bringing to a state approaching completion, works which he would not give to the world. 'Le Poète Déchu,' if we may judge from the plot as described by Paul de Musset, and by the verses "L'Adieu" and "L'Idylle," which were to have been inserted in it, would have been an addition to the literature of the time not unworthy of the author's reputation. Approved and applauded by all to whom it was read, and actually advertised as about to appear, the work at the last moment failed to satisfy the writer, and the sheets which might have pleased and interested the world were consigned to the

flames. A few pages, which de Musset thought contained suitable themes for poetical treatment, escaped for the time; but, with the exception of the verses mentioned above, no part of this work was ever given to the public. What was left of the abandoned sheets, Paul de Musset, obeying with great reluctance his brother's commands, was forced after his death to destroy.

From the commencement of the year 1840, when de Musset's health again gave way, we find a remarkable diminution of his literary activity. His career as an author, begun at so early an age, and pursued for ten years with almost excessive energy, appeared to him now to be closed, though he had not completed his thirtieth year. He had lost, he said, the "feeling of pleasure"; and when we consider the character of the man, we can easily account by that for the failure, not of his abilities, but of his activity. For de Musset's work had never been the production of resolution or stern application; it was always the semi-involuntary result of those moments of fitful inspiration in which, to use his own words, the Muse came to visit him. He began now to lose interest in his art, and to feel, in fact, what he had long said in moments of despondency, that the public did not do him justice. And from this time, therefore, save in a few slight though charming pieces, the Muse is dumb, and the poet's life belongs more to his own private circle than to the public. The only production of this year is 'Simone,' a tale from Boccaccio, written to please the lady whom in former times he had affectionately entitled his *marraine*, and between whom and himself there still existed a close and intimate friendship.

The despondency of de Musset was now no longer an effect of passion. It had a deeper source. It is evident, from all that his brother tells us, that the enthusiasm with which, not always but on repeated occasions, his works had been received, had in a great degree failed him. Many of his publications were passed over in silence; the fickle mind of the public had veered away from him. It was a period of the greatest literary excitement and power in France, the fulness of the last great age of Gallic genius, so that this coldness was more than usually hard to bear. From what strange combination did it come? De Musset would seem to have been seriously affected by his thirtieth birthday, which occurred in December 1840. He seemed to himself to have lived too long, to have accomplished nothing. It appeared to him as a turning-point beyond which only the utmost inspiration of a high moral courage could carry him. And this he did not feel that he possessed. The sudden sight of a lady whom he had not seen for a long time, sent him back upon youthful recollections, and the result was the poem of the "Souvenir," which appeared in the 'Revue' in February 1841. But as soon as it was published his old disgust returned. "I have opened my bleeding heart to stupid brutes," he cried. "The thought makes me wild that any rake or fool may recite if he pleases, like a song, these lines—

> 'And sadder sights my eyes have looked upon
> Than Juliet, lying lifeless in her tomb.'

These words I said to myself when I was alone in the silence of the night, and here they are, thrown for food

to the lowest. Would it not have been time enough after my death?" He added, with an exasperation deeper still, "Happily, you will see, no one will say a word about them!" At the same time, "his two noble children," for whom he had toiled, and whom he had celebrated and defended, were absent or cold to him. Friendship did something to fill the warmer place which was empty, but not enough; and the stream of life ran low in the poet, who felt himself an old man at thirty — the poet of youth and passion to whom a lower level of feeling was as death.

While in this state of despondency, chance threw into de Musset's hands the ultra-patriotic verses of Becker upon the old and standing feud between Germany and France. It was accompanied in the 'Revue des Deux Mondes,' in which it appeared, by a pacific answer bearing the title of the "Marseillaise" of peace. Irritated by the verses of the German, de Musset was enraged by this too mild reply. "While we were at breakfast," says his brother, "his face gradually lighted up, he struck the table with his fist, went off to his room, and shut himself in. Two hours later he returned, and recited to us the 'Rhin Allemand'—a poem full of warlike sentiment and strong patriotic feeling." It was but a French brag in answer to a German one, but it was a spirited, if brief, reawakening of poetic fervour in a very unfruitful period.

We can perhaps hardly agree with *la marraine* in ranking this effort above Béranger's best—but, if no other praise can be given to it, we have the facts that the heir to the throne of France, the Duc d'Orléans, sent the author his congratulations; that it was set to

music by a large number of composers, and sung everywhere; and that the author received, as was almost to be expected, numerous challenges from officers in the Prussian army. As regards these last signs of the power of his answer, de Musset most reasonably thought that his quarrel, if with any one, was with Becker, and that the Prussian officers might find their antagonists among the young Frenchmen of their own rank and station, leaving the writers to settle the matter by themselves. The impression, however, produced upon de Musset by the praise given to this effort by *la marraine*, accompanied as it was by friendly censure on his idleness, brought forth the verses in defence of "La Paresse," in which he justifies that idleness, and illustrates, not for the first time, his favourite theory "Ma Muse est à moi." No outside influence could make him work, none could prevent him from working when the fit was upon him: the visits of the Muse were to him, and concerned him only.

The year 1842 brought nothing to the public, for the pretty story entitled 'Le Merle Blanc' can hardly be counted as serious work, any more than the *chansons* of no importance which appeared during this year; but it brought a great blow to de Musset in the death of his old friend and constant patron, the Duc d'Orléans. This calamity was to our poet a double blow. It was not only his friend and patron that had been taken away; it was also, according to his political views, the hope of the nation. The mournful remarks with which he greeted the sad news are enough to show that, like most true Frenchmen of his time, he joined his hopes for the future fortune of France to those which more

immediately concerned himself. "It seems," he said, "that Fate will not allow our poor France even a glimpse of a future (*un seul jour d'avenir*). As for my future, I have none. I see nought before me but dulness and sorrow; my only wish is to go from hence as soon as may be." The grief, real as it was, which de Musset felt at this national misfortune does not appear to have extinguished the cynicism which we now and then find in him, as he is reported, when asked semi-officially to write something about the calamity, to have said that he would express his lamentations as soon as the eyes of the official mourners were dry. Taken altogether, the end of this year 1842 must have left him in a most desolate state: he had quarrelled with Rachel, Pauline Garcia had left Paris, his friend Tattet was away, and, to finish all, his brother even left him for Italy. With but the occasional comfort of a letter from his "god-mother," Alfred was now alone.

It is perhaps hardly to be wondered at that little came of the next year. A poem was indeed imagined and actually begun upon Allori's picture of Judith, but, like many similar beginnings of de Musset's, it came to nothing. An idle life, broken only by frequent visits to any of the theatres where music, which always exercised a great influence upon our poet, was to be heard, at last aroused the fears of the ever watchful *marraine*. Yet even she appears to have been able to do little or nothing with him, and the idle fit continued, if indeed we can call it a fit: it was destined to last till the end of his life. To this year, however, we owe a very charming little sketch of the Parisian *grisette*. 'Mimi Pinson' is one of the prettiest of de Musset's prose works. The

silence into which his life had thus fallen was justified, to himself at least, by the continued and increasing sense of public neglect. Paul de Musset relates at length an instance of this want of appreciation which evidently went to the poet's heart. The 'Revue des Deux Mondes' in the beginning of the year 1842 contained an article by Sainte-Beuve on French poets of the day, in which Alfred de Musset was placed in the third rank, "in the midst of a group so numerous that even ladies were included in it," says his brother, with a somewhat uncivil scorn of feminine achievements. The director of the 'Revue' in alarm showed the paragraph to Paul, to ask his opinion as to its effect upon his brother, and engaged to do his best to persuade Sainte-Beuve to change it. Nevertheless the article appeared as it was written, notwithstanding that Alfred de Musset was one of the most famous contributors to the journal in question.

"When the number of the 'Revue' was brought in, I had a presentiment," says Paul, "knowing well the susceptible temper and obstinate self-opinion of Sainte-Beuve, that the paragraph would be unchanged. Alfred took up the 'Revue,' opened it by chance, and fell at once upon the page in which he was named. A minute after he put back the magazine on the mantelpiece, saying to himself, 'You too, Sainte-Beuve!'"

This is but another of many proofs of the weakness of contemporary opinion. Sainte-Beuve himself was inconsistent, having on other occasions elevated Alfred to the highest place; but the wound was especially crushing at this period to the depressed and unhappy poet. Other evils still more ruinous and debasing would

seem to have mingled with the despondency caused by neglect and disappointment. Even in the affectionate narrative of his brother, in which these evils are very lightly touched, the falling away of the wounded spirit to consolations unworthy of him, which could but lead from misery to despair, may be gathered from the distress and anxiety of all who loved him. Many incidents of life combined to loosen upon Alfred the restraints which were so necessary to his capricious and susceptible soul. His home was partially broken up by the marriage of his sister, whom his mother accompanied to the country. His constant counsellor and closest friend—his brother Paul—was called away, sometimes for a year at a time. Tattet, the friend whom he loved next best, had gone; all his friends and his lovers had forsaken him. Thus left alone in Paris, the poet spent his time between mournful seclusion in his empty house and fits of passionate theatre-going and attendance at the opera, from which, satiated with music and loneliness, he would plunge again into his dreary solitude, which the Muse no longer visited, and out of which no utterance came. The lady who is always spoken of as his "godmother"—one of the most anxious of the group who watched the going down of his sun in those stormy clouds—at last, in a fit of that terrible impatience which sometimes assails the watchers at such a spectacle, implored his brother to interfere. Paul assured her sadly that he had said and done all that was possible, and that there was but one influence, and that her own, which might still do something. "Then I will try," she said.

The effort of this anxious woman was not more suc-

cessful than those of the family. Some months after, when Paul asked her what had happened in the interview, her emotion was great. The reply of the poet had overwhelmed all her attempts at remonstrances. "I have been beaten at all points," she said. "We are as infants beside him. Sooner or later his immense superiority will be recognised by all the world." The passion and eloquence of the despairing soul had silenced everything that could be said. He sent her next day a heartrending sonnet, in which even his weakness is glorified by a certain mournful dignity of self-abandonment.

There was still, however, a moment of return for the poet. By a very curious incident—a chance so strange, that it looks like a device of the stage—one of the plays which de Musset, after his early failure at the Odéon, had never attempted to offer for representation, was brought triumphantly back to Paris by Mme. Allan-Despreaux, who had seen in a small theatre in St Petersburg a little Russian piece which pleased her greatly. She was so much delighted with it that she asked to have a translation made, in order to play it before the Court. Fortunately, however, before taking any further steps, it was discovered that the little piece was French, and neither less nor more than the 'Caprice'—one of the lightest of those little drawing-room pieces in which de Musset's art was so exquisite. By means of the trifle thus strangely brought back to a native audience, de Musset regained for a time the fame which seemed to have slipped from his hands.

"This little piece," says his brother, "did more for the reputation of its author than all his other works. In a few days the name of Alfred de Musset had penetrated into those

middle regions where poetry and books have little scope. The species of interdict which had weighed upon us was taken off as by enchantment, and his verses were quoted everywhere."

The 'Caprice' was followed by another elegant trifle of the same kind, 'Il faut qu'une porte soit ouverte ou fermée,' a new composition: and by the comedy in three acts, 'Il ne faut jurer de rien,' one of the most important of his lighter plays. The 'Chandelier,' 'On ne saurait penser à tout,' and other pieces followed; and for a time success buoyed up and restored the courage of the poet. At poetry he began to work again with all the passion and rapidity of his youth.

It is needless to follow him in the vicissitudes of his renewed friendship with Rachel, and with other celebrities of the stage. He engaged again and again to write a play for that great actress, but what with her caprices, and what with his own, this intention was never carried out. He was, however, restored to the world and to a life among his peers by his theatrical success, and soon after was encouraged to present himself as a candidate for the vacant *fauteuil* in the Academy — that crown of honour for every literary Frenchman, ridiculed by those out of reach of the distinction, but dear to all to whom it is possible. De Musset himself, with all his waywardness, "regarded it as a consecration necessary to his fame." Once more we have an astonishing proof of the blindness of contemporaries to the genius developed among them.

"His election was not secured without difficulty. Of all the distinguished personages who surrounded him, ten at the most knew some pages of his poems. M. de Lamartine

himself confessed that he had never read them. On the eve of the election M. Amelot, who had a great regard for Alfred, and had determined to vote for him, said in the garden of the Palais-Royal to the publisher Charpentier, 'Poor Alfred! he is a charming fellow, and delightful in society; but, between you and me, he never has written, and never will, a line of poetry.'"

So much is the opinion of the expert worth in such matters.

It was thus amid a glow of renewed work, prosperity, and honour that the poet's sun began to go down. He had never quite recovered from his serious illness of 1840, when his lungs were permanently weakened, and a life of much self-indulgence and self-neglect had left him without defence against the growing evil. Various vicissitudes had taken place in his external life and circumstances during these years. He had mourned the death of the Duc d'Orléans, and he had seen, not with any very deep feeling, the downfall of that house, in which the duke alone had been his friend. The Revolution, though he was in no sense hostile to it, had taken, by the hands of M. Ledru Rollin, his appointment from him, which, however, when the passion of the moment was over, had been restored by M. Fortoul. He had seen a new theatrical star arise in Madame Ristori, and had hailed her as the representative of the Italy he loved. The breaking up of his mother's house, and his own establishment in a little solitary housekeeping of his own, had been at his age of forty a greater wrench and shock to him than such an event would ordinarily be to the most home-loving youth of half his age. And at the same time he would seem to

have fallen in his bachelorhood and solitariness into the habits of an age more advanced than his own. But he had not learnt to think of his failing health, or to take the most necessary precautions to preserve it. We have been entirely unsuccessful in our endeavour to set de Musset's character before our readers if we need say that, from beginning to end, he suffered from his own imprudence. No feeling of illness could stop him if he had a chance of seeing a friend whom he had not met for some time; and his crowning folly, if we can give such a name to so self-sacrificing an act, was to walk, through a drenching rain, most of the way to the Academy to vote for his friend Émile Augier, who was, as if Providence would not allow this devoted act of friendship to be useless, elected by one vote only. Paul de Musset remonstrated naturally enough with his brother for this imprudence. Alfred's only answer was, "Never mind, it will be the last; Tattet is calling me." Tattet, his dearest friend, was recently dead. It *was* the last imprudence; a month afterwards he had followed his friend.

The world has long ago rectified the mistake of his generation, and set Alfred de Musset in his right place as one of the most genuine of poets, as well as one of the greatest of recent times. His position among his countrymen is unique. He is of neither of the schools which tore literary France asunder, and he is of both. It is one of his characteristics, among the groups which discussed this question so hotly, that he troubled himself by no controversy on the matter, and was too true a poet to make the forms of poetry a subject of disunion. He took the lyre that was readiest to his hand, and

played it with consummate grace and sweetness, indifferent after what fashion it was strung. In this respect, as in some others, he was more the child of Shakespeare than of Corneille and Molière. His inspiration was that of nature and humanity. His age and country made him indifferent to high standards of morality, and so far vitiated his taste as to make it possible for him to represent the highest poetry as issuing from the midst of revolting circumstances of vice, but his standard was higher and his taste purer than that of his successors.

Both in character and genius he was full of caprice and wilfulness. His excessively sensitive mind, affected to a more than ordinary degree by trivial circumstances and passing states of feeling, was constantly leading him to changes which to us seem inexplicable, and inconsistent with great work of any sort. In the midst of a serious work he was just as likely as not to break off suddenly for the sake of a joyous supper-party or the company of Bernerette; while at the same time it was no unusual occurrence that, coming back fresh from these or similar amusements, he would shut himself up in his room, only to emerge with newly written verses, in which the thought soars almost to sublimity. And the most curious part of all this is, that in both moods and their results all is real: the depth, and sometimes—though not as often as might be wished—the purity, of the serious thoughts were just as genuine as the *abandon* of the intervals of dissipation; and the writer of the 'Espoir en Dieu' is, strange as it may appear, the same man, in all but his mood, as the scoffing 'Enfant du Siècle.' His is the very type of the Platonic mind in which the different elements, constantly at war, seem

to fight against each other with varying fortune—now one, now the other, having the upper hand; but whichever might for the time be victorious, in de Musset the victory was complete: the laughter is never forced, the seriousness never superficial; and when an understanding is arrived at, and the mirth gives up its sensuality, and the gravity its gloom, the resulting harmony has none the less genuine ring, that it owes its inspiration to the same genius which gave to the two discarded elements their impressiveness and their charm.

CHAPTER II.

POÉSIES.

NOTHING is more difficult than to extinguish a general tradition or prejudice, especially when it fixes the character of a nation: and it is wellnigh impossible to dispel such a prejudice when it affects literature. The poetry of France has been much shut out from English readers by such a general and fixed idea. Educated to Corneille and Racine, if to anything, as the exponents of French poetry, the ordinary reader has been very slow to awaken to the revolution both of poetical form and idea during the later period of literary history in France, and especially to the new spring of the Romantic school, so called, which has brought back the old inspiration of the Troubadours, with something of the freedom and nature always dear to our own British traditions, to some of the great modern masters of French poetry or *Poésie*, to use their own softer and more melodious word. Victor Hugo has impressed the imagination of the whole world with his great romances, but even he is only known to a few, in England at least, as the author of some of the finest poetry that has made

this century, now nearly passing from us, so illustrious. And de Musset, who had not the privilege of that conspicuous and picturesque old age which forced his contemporary upon the consciousness of all, both great and small, who know anything about books, has made a still smaller impression upon the general reader: we are still told every day that French poetry is stilted, stiff, and unattractive, that its peculiar charms are inappreciable by the English ear, in face of some of the most charming lyrics in the world, and of a fountain of song as fresh and spontaneous as any that has flowed within the present century in any quarter of the world. We will endeavour as best we may, though fully sensible how little justice can ever be done by translation, to give some examples of de Musset's verse.

His first volume, published under the title of the 'Contes d'Espagne et d'Italie,' was hailed with enthusiasm by the poet's own circle, and very well received by the public, as has been seen. It consisted chiefly of stories in verse, of love, revenge, and jealousy, neither very moral nor very lofty in tone; but his audience was not severe on these points. A reflection of Don Juan—him of Lord Byron, not the more splendid hero of Molière — an echo at least from that poet who, more than any foreign singer, or at least than any Englishman, has influenced France, breathes through most of the 'Contes'; but though they are wonderful for a youth of nineteen, they are scarcely remarkable enough to be quoted in our limited space as works of de Musset. We have already referred to the 'Ballade à la Lune,' and here is a pretty verse from the poem addressed to Juana:—

"Time bears away upon his wing
The swallows and the joyous spring,
And life and days remembered not:
All, as a smoke, must disappear,
Fame that uplifts and hopes that cheer
And I who loved thee once so dear,
And thou who hast it all forgot."

In the next year the dramatic instinct, so strong in de Musset, found its first expression, and the 'Spectacle dans un Fauteuil,' including the two little comedies, 'La Coupe et les Lèvres' and 'À quoi rêvent les Jeunes Filles,' made its appearance. After, however, such easy triumphs, after such *tours de force* as 'Mardoche' and 'Namouna,' long poems written with a flying pen, in reply to the printer's appeals for more copy to make up the successive small volumes which were the production of those early years, de Musset suddenly rose to his full force in the remarkable poem of 'Rolla.' The story of this singular production repels the sympathy of (at least) the English reader in every detail. It is the catastrophe of a *jeune débauché*—not in himself a hero who attracts us, but one who has always had a charm for the French reader. Jacques Rolla has been brought up as a rich man's son, doing nothing, without talent or possibility. He finds himself, on his father's death, with a fortune much smaller than his expectations, which, with the true spirit of the haunter of *cafés et cabarets*, he divides into three portions, each sufficient for the debauchery of a year. The third of these is exhausted when we find him in the chamber of a poor victim—a girl brought up for the vilest purposes, and knowing nothing better, but in the flower of beauty and

extreme youth. It is his last night on earth, the phial which is to end his career is at hand, and the thoughts of the profligate turn at this supreme moment to the solemn mysteries of heaven and earth,—the hopeless world through which he has stumbled wildly, thanks to Voltaire and an age without faith—and the still darker unknown before him. No one perhaps but a Frenchman would have put these thoughts into the mind of a man in such a place, ending in unrepentant sin, in the last refinement of profligacy which a depraved imagination can invent, his miserable career. The poem begins with a sort of invocation:—

"Mourn you the time when Heaven our lives among
Did live and breathe, a tribe of deities,—
When Venus from the bitter billows sprung,
From her long locks the sea's salt tear-drops wrung,
And virgin yet the world could fertilise?
Mourn you the time when on each sunny day
Wantoned the nymphs within the running streams,
With their bright laughter startling from their dreams
The lazy Fauns who 'mid the rushes lay?
When thrilled the streams unto Narcissus' kiss,
When Hercules in his raw lion-skin
From pole to pole o'er this wide world of sin
Of an eternal justice spread the bliss;
When mocking wood-gods, leafy boughs among,
Swung 'neath the oak-trees as the wind might blow,
And echoed in their laugh the passer's song,
When all was godlike, even human woe.
When the world worshipped what it kills to-day,
When with four thousand gods no faith was dim,
When, save Prometheus, all the earth was gay,
Prometheus, Satan's brother, fallen like him.
And since o'er heaven, earth, man, the change has come
When dead the world is laid where it was born,

When from the North o'er the great wreck of Rome
The storm has spread its winding-sheet forlorn—
Mourn ye the time when rose in barb'rous day
An age of gold, more fertile and more fair,
And when with Lazarus, with face more gay
The old world rose again to upper air?
Mourn you the time when our romances old
Spread to their magic world their wings of gold,
And all our monuments and all our creeds
Bore the white mantle of their virgin deeds?
When 'neath Christ's hand new birth to all did come,—
The prince's palace and the priest's poor home,
Bearing the same cross on their brows on high,
As from the mountains they behold the sky;
St Peter, Nôtre Dame, Strasburg, Cologne
Kneeling together in their robes of stone,
And the world's nations in submissive throng
Raised of new ages the triumphant song.
When history's prophecies were all proved right,
When every crucifix of ivory white
On holy altars its pure arms did ope,
When life was young again, and death had hope?
Christ, I am not of those whom prayer to Thee
Leads trembling to Thy temple's dumb retreat,
And not of those who seek Thy Calvary
Beating their breasts, to kiss Thy bleeding feet.
Beneath Thy sacred roof erect stand I,
While in the dark Thy people on their knees
Still bend in faith to the blest harmony,
As bend light reeds when blows the evening breeze.
Thy holy word in faith I cannot hear;
Late came I to a world for me too wise,
The last age had no hope, this has no fear,
Our comets have unpeopled the old skies.
Now chance the worlds, their old illusions gone,
Leads in the dark, and o'er their wrecks doth go
The spirit of the past, to hurl o'erthrown
Thy mangled saints even to the gulf below.

Yet, one most faithless in this faithless day
Would kiss this dust, and here, O Christ, would give
Tears on the earth that by Thy death doth live,
Which without Thee would die and pass away.
Great God, who now again can bid her live,
Made young again by Thy most precious blood?
What Thou didst give us, Christ, who now can give
To make us young, yesterday's aged brood?"

In this singular vein the moralising flows on, until, driven from generalities by the particular facts of the situation, Rolla's thoughts turn to the man to whose writings and influence the want of religion and morality of the age was generally attributed. He speaks to Voltaire:—

"Sleep'st thou in peace? on thy bare lips to-day
Wanders it still, Voltaire, that hideous sneer?
Thine age too young to value thee, men say,
Our age should please thee, for thy sons are here.
It fell on us, that edifice immense,
Which with rough hands thou sappedst night and day.
. . . . . .
What say to thee these masses, still in death
Each silent wall, each desecrated shrine
To th' end of time unpeopled by thy breath?
What says to thee this cross? this Christ divine?
Bleeds He again, when but to tear Him hence
From His frail tree as a poor faded flower,
Thy ghost still shakes Him at the midnight hour?
Think'st thou thy mission wrought without offence?
Like God, when first this world before Him stood,
Think'st thou 'tis well, and that thy work is good?"

This poem, which, in the opinion of French critics, did not suffer as it might have done among ourselves from the choice of the subject, fully established de Musset's reputation as a poet, and he strengthened his hold upon

his countrymen by the composition of the wonderful series of the 'Nuits,' which followed in the few succeeding years. These poems perhaps may not impress equally the mind of the English reader, but there is a certain union in them of classical suggestion and modern atmosphere which has always been agreeable to our neighbours across the Channel. The Muse approaches the chamber in which the poet sits idle or languid or indifferent, forgetful of her charms or weary of his life. "Prends ton luth," she says, offering him that instrument of deliverance which in all circumstances has been of such sovereign use in the healing of poetic pains. In the 'Nuit de Mai,' which was the first of these productions, the heavenly visitor is heard approaching his retirement, while he muses and mourns unconscious of her presence. The tide of life runs low, and he finds no object of sufficient interest to rouse him. Drawing nearer and nearer, however, until at last he becomes aware of her approach, she repeats her call, "Take thy lute."

"*The Muse.* Kiss me, my poet, and take up thy lute,
For now the wild-rose feels her young buds shoot;
This evening spring is born, the breezes rise,
The song-bird too, the sweet dawn heralding,
Now to the leafy bushes eager flies:
Kiss me, my poet, take thy lute and sing.

The Poet. Down in the vale the sky is dark,
I seemed a veiled form to mark
Floating amid the forest shades:
From out the meadow did she pass,
Scarce touched her foot the flowery grass:
'Twas a strange dream, and now, alas!
See into nothingness she fades.

The Muse. Take up thy lute, for on the lawn the night
Rocks in her perfumed veil the evening breeze;
The virgin rose shuts up her petals bright,
With her last breath sickening the heavy bees.
Listen, for all is still; think of thy love
Now, where the limes spread shady boughs above.
The setting sun a sweet farewell has sped;
To-night all things must flourish. Nature now
Is filled with perfumes and love's whispered vow,
Like nuptial chamber of two newly wed.

The Poet. Why beats my heart so hurriedly?
What stirs within my breast that I
Feel a strange sense of terror rise?
Did I hear some one knock outside?
Why does my lamp, but now which died,
Now dazzle my affrighted eyes?
Great God! my body shakes with fear.
Who's there? who calls me? No one here!
I am alone, the clock strikes near;
Bare solitude upon me lies.

The Muse. My poet, take thy lute; to God's own veins
The boiling juices of new youth return.
My heart is anxious, for this pleasure pains,
And the dry breezes make my lips to burn.
Look at me, trembling child, for fair am I,
Our first embrace, hast thou forgot it all?
Pale didst thou grow as first my wings drew nigh,
And with wet eyes into my arms didst fall.
Ah! I have cured thee of a bitter ill,
In thy first youth pining for love away.
Console me now, for hope deferred can kill;
I must entreat that I may live till day.

The Poet. Is it thy voice that calls me here?
Oh, my poor Muse! is't thee I see?
Sole being modest and sincere,
With whom still dwells some love for me?

Thou com'st with fairest tresses crowned.
'Tis thou, my love, my sister blest.
I feel that through the night profound,
As thy gold mantle wraps me round,
Rays glide from it into my breast."

The Muse argues on, growing more and more earnest from the Poet's unsatisfactory answers, and at last breaks out—

"Take up thy lute; for I must speak at last.
The spring-tide breeze my wings away will bear;
I leave the earth borne on the wind's wild blast—
Ah! God has heard me, for I see a tear!

The Poet. If nought thou seekest, sister dear,
Save but from loving lips a kiss,
Or from my eyes a falling tear,
Right gladly will I give thee this,
To keep thee mindful of our love
Returning to thy home above.
Of cheering hope I do not sing,
Of glory, nor of happy days,
Alas! not even of suffering.
My lips in silence listening,
Are mute to hear what my heart says."

The 'Nuit de Décembre' has an entirely different *motif*. No Muse here comes down to hold a conversation with the poet. A deeper and more subtle idea seizes him: something still more ethereal than the Muse, a vision less palpable, a companion still more intimate, has been with him all his life. Wherever he has turned, something that has made his self-consciousness more vivid has encountered him whenever he has been alone: the narrative of these frequent meetings with this dream-like mystery and delicate realisation is full of a pro-

longed and pathetic sweetness. The reader wonders with the poet who is this ever-present uncommunicative vision, yet is prepared by its very silence and vagueness for the revelation of the reply. The story begins at the earlier period of his life :—

"A schoolboy in our lonely room,
Despite its solitary gloom,
I chanced one night alone to be,
When at my table came to rest
A child in mourning sables drest,
Who, as my twin, resembled me.

His brow was sad, yet fair and bright
Shone to my candle's flickering light,
And in my book he read awhile ;
Then on my hand his head he laid,
And wrapt in thought, till morning stayed
Dreaming, with a sweet pensive smile.

My fourteenth year had almost gone ;
I wandered o'er the heath alone,
Hard by the forest lazily.
Beneath a tree had come to rest
A youth in mourning sables drest,
Who, as my twin, resembled me.

I asked my way. His right hand held
A lute ; in th' other I beheld
A wealth of wild-flowers fair to see.
With friendly nod he gave 'Good day,'
And then, half-turning as he lay,
Towards the hill he pointed me.

At th' age when love and truth seem one
I sat within my room alone,
Weeping o'er my first misery.

At my fireside there came to rest
A stranger all in sables drest,
  Who, as my twin, resembled me.

Anxious his face and sad his eyes,
One hand he lifted to the skies,
  In th' other a bright blade did gleam;
He seemed to sorrow at my pain,
And heaved one sigh, nor spoke again,
  But vanished from me as a dream.

Raising my glass one summer day
To drink some toast or challenge gay
  In wildest reckless revelry,
In front of me there came to rest
A guest in mourning sables drest,
  Who, as my twin, resembled me.

He wore beneath his mantle worn
A wretched rag of purple torn;
  His head a faded myrtle spanned.
His thin arm still sought mine, and when
My glass touched his in welcome, then
  It shivered in my trembling hand.

A year had passed since this, and I,
Where I had seen my father die,
  By the bedside had bent the knee.
At the bed-head there came to rest
An orphan all in sable drest,
  Who, as my twin, resembled me.

His eyes were drowned with weeping now,
As sorrow's angels: on his brow
  He wore a wreath of cruel thorn.
His lute upon the ground did lie,
His purple bore blood's fearful dye,
  And with his glaive his heart was torn.

Whenever I asleep would lie,
Whenever I have longed to die,
Where'er on earth I've chanced to be,
Upon my path has sunk to rest
A wretched wight in sable drest,
Who, as my twin, resembles me."

"Who then art thou, whom, wheresoe'er I go,
Upon my path I cannot choose but see?
I cannot from thy sympathetic woe
Think that thou canst mine evil genius be.
With too much patience thy sweet smile is fraught,
Thy tears too much of true compassion lend,
When I see thee I love God as I ought;
Thy grief is sister to my saddest thought—
'Tis like the sympathy of a dear friend.

Who art thou? My good angel thou art not,
Never with warning hast thou come to me.
Thou watchest all my woes, and, strangest thought,
Unmoved thou canst my greatest sufferings see.
Since I first met thee twenty years are spent,
And yet I cannot name thee if I would.
Who then art thou, even though from heaven sent?
Thy smile no portion has in my content;
Thy sympathy soothes not my saddest mood.

This very night I saw thee come again—
A troubled night, a night of storm and dread,
The wind's wild wings beat 'gainst my window-pane,
As lonely o'er the couch I bent my head,
Gazing upon, alas! a vacant part,
Warm with the breath of a lost yesterday,
And dreamed how soon can woman's love depart,
And felt how there a fragment of my heart
Did slowly tear and tear itself away.

Who art thou, spectre of my younger days?
Pilgrim unwearied ever, tell me why,
Wherever I have passed, I find always
Thou there within the shade dost silent lie.
Say, who art thou, my solitary guest,
Constant companion where I mourning go?
Ever thou followest me—at whose behest?
Who art thou, brother, thou who enterest
Only when tears relieve my bitter woe?"

The vision answers—

"My friend, our father is the same,
Nor guardian angel is my name,
Nor evil genius of mankind.
Of those I love I never know
Where on this earth their steps may go—
This mud-plot where we are confined.

Nor god nor demon from below
Am I, and well thou namedst me now,
Thy brother when thou calledst me.
I will be with thee on thy way,
Till thy life reach its ending day;
Then on thy tomb my seat shall be.

Our God entrusts thy heart to me:
In deep distress if thou shouldst be,
Come to me, let no fear intrude.
I follow thee by high command,
But never may I touch thy hand;
Brother, my name is Solitude."

Nothing could be more delicate than this dreamy picture of the effect of self-realisation and heightened consciousness which comes to the visionary soul when alone and in sorrow. It has been expressed in many ways, and there

are few poetical souls which have not experienced something of this strange and potent influence; but no one else, so far as we know, has embodied the solitude which brings him face to face with himself in so complete an image.

It was in the same sorrowful mood that de Musset wrote his famous 'Lettre à Lamartine,' but striking a stronger and bolder note. Here we find the poet no longer a visionary, but in the midst of the troubles and struggles of his life, pouring forth the cry of desertion, the pain of loneliness, to another poet, a master in his own art, from whom he has received solace and encouragement. It is once more as a lover forsaken that he makes his plaint, but the intolerableness of the separation is not embittered as before by the sense of injury and scorn. The story which de Musset's biographer connects with this poem is that of the lady who loved the poet indeed, but fled from him for the sake of duty. The sacrifice which she made to honour and purity he found himself incapable of responding to; and as he sits alone, struggling against the conviction that all is over, he bethinks him in his despairing musings, now angry, now miserable, of how Lamartine had appealed to Byron at a crisis of his life, and with a similar impulse pours forth his own protest against suffering and fate.

"So, when abandoned by a faithless fair,
When sorrow's anguish first to me was known,
Pierced of a sudden by the darts of care,
Darkness within my heart, I sat alone.
Nor by a clear lake was my resting-place,
Nor 'mid the fragrance of a green hillside:
My tear-drowned eyes saw but the vacant space,
No echoes to my stifled sobs replied.

'Twas in a little, dark, and tortuous street
Of that great sink of all iniquities
That men call Paris; all around the cries
Arose of that deaf mocking crowd who treat
Misfortune's cries with scorn: dimly their light
The lamps upon the grimy pavement shed,
More gloomy than the darkness, while men sped
Uncertain to and fro through the dull night,
Guided by those faint glimmerings, or the sound
Of the strange glee that shouted all around.
'Twas February, in the merry time
Of carnival, when in the muddy street
The masquers, hot with wine, each other greet
With some rude jest or silly scrap of rhyme.
At times a noisy troop would through the rain,
Packed in a car uncovered, roll along,
'Neath the pitch-lamps roaring an obscene song,
Then in the mad town disappear again.
And in the taverns woman, child, and man,
Stained with the wine-lees, wallowed in delight,
The while the vile priestesses of the night
Showed here and there their spectral forms and wan.
'Twas like a scene of ancient revelry,
One of those nights to Rome of old so dear,
When, torch in hand, dishevelled would appear
Venus from out her secret sanctuary.
Great God! that I should sit and weep alone
On such a night! What had I done to thee,
My only love, that thou shouldst fly from me,
Who saidst God knew that thou wert all mine own?
Cold, cruel beauty, didst thou know that I,
Braving my shame, daring the cold dark night,
Watched thy lamp, twinkling with uncertain light,
As a star twinkles in a wintry sky?
No! to the window ne'er would even come
Thy shadow, nor wouldst thou look out to mark
If cold the air, or if the sky was dark,
Or look for me within that awful tomb.

There, Lamartine, in this dark street and mean,
Upon a stone in a small court apart,
Hugging my wound, both hands upon my heart,
Feeling unconquered love there bleed unseen,—
There, in this night of horror and of woe,
Amid the transports of the furious crowd,
Who to my youth seem shouting as they go—
'Ho! thou that weep'st, hast thou not laughed as loud?'
Against the wall I dashed in my despair,
Twice on my naked breast the dagger drew:
Pure, noble poet, doubt it not, 'twas there
Thy heavenly songs spoke in my heart anew."

He goes on to call Lamartine's attention to the effect of grief upon the soul, and ends by telling him what "the angels of sorrow" have been saying to him:—

"Poor restless creature, for a moment born,
What is thy grief? What makes thee groan and sigh?
Thy soul disturbs thee; think'st thou it can mourn?
Those tears will cease, thy soul can never die.

Thou feel'st thy heart with woman's love o'erta'en,
Thou think'st it breaks with grief, and loud dost cry
To God, that He may free thy soul from pain:
Thy heart will heal, thy soul can never die.

A moment's trouble, and thou say'st, forlorn,
The past conceals the future from thine eye:
Weep not for yesterday, await the morn,
The time will pass, thy soul can never die.

Thy body feels the sorrow of thy mind;
Heavy thy head, thy limbs support deny.
Down, down upon thy knees, creature most blind,
Though death will come, thy soul can never die.

Thy name, thy glory will with time decay,
Thy bones within the grave in dust shall lie;
Thy love, if well thou lovest, lives alway,—
Thy soul remembers, and it cannot die."

Besides the 'Nuit d'Août,'—a rather querulous discourse with the Muse, in which he characteristically turns round, and, just when he seems to be giving up his evil ways, suddenly ends by declaring that if one has loved one must always love,—de Musset produced one piece of great interest in the year 1836. He had ever been a devoted, though distant, adorer of Malibran; and when she died in the autumn of this year, he poured out his feelings in some very touching and beautiful verses, pretending towards the end to blame her imprudence, and asking her did she know what she was doing:—

"Knew you how soon men can forgetful be?
Why give to them your life, your happy years?
Could a few flowers so swell your vanity,
That you could shed for them those genuine tears,
When others act, and high in station rise,
Are crowned, and not a tear shines in their eyes?

Then why not smile, turning aside your head
As in their feigned emotion others do?
None would have seen it, for all loved thee so.
Singing 'Oh, willow!' why such woe? instead
You should have thought of how your lyre you bore.
La Pasta does, why should you aim at more?
. . . . . .
You knew it, and that we have here below
Naught good but love, and naught but suffering true:
Each night you felt your cheeks yet paler grow.
The world, its crowds, its envy well you knew,
In that frail frame concentring all your fire,
You with the rest watched Malibran expire.

Go, then, thy death is sweet, thy task is o'er;
What men call genius in the world to-day
Is nothing but the need of love, no more,
And human love full soon must pass away:
Happy thy fate, worthy a soul like thine,
To perish for a love that was divine."

The next year, 1837, produced one play and two stories, but in the way of verse nothing of any note except the last of the 'Nuits,'—'La Nuit d'Octobre.' It takes the form of all the series except the 'Nuit de Décembre,' and represents the poet sitting alone and visited by the Muse, whom he accosts in a more cheerful mood than usual.

"*The Poet.* The ills I suffered as a dream are gone,
Their faint remembrance I can but compare
To the light wavy mists that meet the dawn,
And with the dew soon vanish into air.
The Muse. My poet, what could be that ill,
What then that suffering, hidden still,
Which you from me divided kept?
Still its effects in me remain;
What, then, is this yet unknown pain—
The pain for which so long I've wept?
The Poet. A common ill, well known to every man;
For when some trouble in our hearts has dwelt,
We think, poor fools, that till our grief began
No one on earth had woe or sorrow felt.
The Muse. In life no common sorrow is,
Save in a soul of common clay.
Friend, let these silent mysteries
Escape from out thy heart to-day.
Come, trust me, speak with confidence,
The god who rules o'er reticence

Is one of Death's own brothers ;
Consoling is our loud complaint,
And often our remorse grows faint
Through one word said to others."

At last, after being assured of the sympathy of the Muse, he breaks out :—

" Days of my work, the days when I have lived,
Solitude, thrice-belovèd of my heart,
Now, praised be God, I come again revived
To my old study, there to dwell apart !
My poor retreat, my walls so oft left bare,
Dusty arm-chairs, lamp faithful for so long,
My palace once, my little world was there :
Now my Muse, young, immortal, queen of song,
Thanks be to God, we'll sing together here.
Yes, I will open all my soul to you,
You shall know all, and I will make you hear
What ill a woman to us men can do.
For 'tis a woman, oh ! my dearest friends
(Alas ! perhaps you know my sad disaster),
It is a woman, and I serve her ends
As a bond-slave toils on to please his master.
Oh, hateful yoke ! by this my heart was made
To lose its strength, its joyous youthfulness,—
And yet, and yet when with my love I strayed,
I caught just half a glimpse of happiness.
. . . . . .
Doubtless the gods' high anger at the time
Was wanting a poor victim for their power ;
For I was punished as for a great crime
For having tried to pass one happy hour."

The next year is one of the most inexplicable in de Musset's life, only perhaps to be explained by the fact that among his prose works of the year was 'Frédéric et

Bernerette,' which is supposed to relate to a not very happy incident in his life. His other prose works were of the same light description, his poetry of the frivolous and somewhat unmeaning type of 'Dupont et Durand'; but in the beginning we have almost the greatest, certainly the most dignified, of his detached poetical pieces, "L'Espoir en Dieu." After going over the different systems and their makers, "who, without faith, have learnt to find the truth," he comes at last in despair, seeing that this hope exists, and that no human argument can account for it, to his famous appeal to the Almighty to set aside all these doubts and tell us who He is:—

"Oh Thou, whom none has ever learnt to know,
Whom none without a falsehood can deny,
Answer me, Thou to whom my birth I owe
And at whose will to-morrow I may die.

Since Thou permittest us to comprehend
Thy being, why let us uncertain be?
To Thee what mournful pleasure can it lend
Our feeble credence wavering to see?

Soon as man gains the strength to raise his head,
He thinks afar he sees Thee in the skies;
The whole creation, 'neath his feet outspread,
Is but Thy glorious temple in his eyes.

When from these thoughts he to himself returns,
He finds Thee there; Thy life his being fills,
Whate'er he suffers, if he loves or mourns
It matters not, it is his God who wills.

The highest minds that here amidst us move,
Of one sublime ambition hear the call,
Th' existence of their Deity to prove,
And print His name upon the hearts of all.

Jupiter, Brahma, Christ, whatever rite
Hath given to Thee its own distinctive name,
Unchanging Truth, or Everlasting Right,
To One all stretch their hands and to the same.

The most degraded children of the soil
From their hearts' depths give earnest thanks to Thee,
When through the drear monotony of toil
They think some gleam of happiness to see.

The whole creation glorifies Thy power,
The bird upon its nest hymns forth Thy praise,
And o'er the earth for one refreshing shower,
Thousands to Thee a grateful anthem raise.

On all Thou doest, we in wonder gaze—
None of Thy works for us in vain can be;
For one kind smile the whole creation prays,
And to that smile all mankind bends the knee.

Why then, O Master over all Most High,
Hast Thou allowed to ill so great a scope,
That Reason, and e'en Virtue, drawing nigh
And seeing all its power, lose heart and hope?

When on this earth so many happy things
Proclaim a Deity, and seem to prove
That here a father to his children brings
The utmost powers of goodness, strength, and love;

How is it that beneath Thy blessed sun
Such hideous deeds of evil find their home,
That on the lips of the most wretched one
Dies out the prayer which up to them had come?

Why on this earth, Thine edifice sublime,
Such lasting strife, such lack of harmony?
Why are we plagued with pestilence and crime?
Oh, most just God! why is it that we die?

With what compassion look'st Thou down below,
When, between good and evil's equal sway,
This world with all its wonders, all its woe,
From out of Chaos weeping made its way.

If Thou didst wish to leave that world a prey
To all the ills by which it is downtrod,
Why leave us that belief by which we may
Through the vast infinite half-see our God?

Why leave the power to our benighted thought,
About a Deity to dream and guess?
Doubt to the world has desolation brought—
We should know more or we should know far less.

If Thou dost think this wretched work of Thine
Unworthy to Thy splendour to draw nigh,
Thou shouldst in Nature so Thyself enshrine
As to be wholly hidden from our eye;

Thy supreme power would still remain Thine own,
We should receive its sentence then as now,
But calm, resigned to what must be unknown,
We with less suffering would receive the blow.

If, when we suffer, when we toil and pray,
We cannot Thy majestic splendour move,
Then keep Thy kingly solitary way,
And shut on us the infinite above.

But if the anguish that to us is given
Can wing its way to Thine almighty throne,—
If, through the vast eternity of heaven,
Thou canst give ear to those on earth who moan,

Then break the vault, th' impenetrable veil
'Neath which all generations past have stood;
Dissolve the mysteries at which we rail,
Reveal Thyself, our God, both just and good.

Nothing upon the earth Thou then shalt find
Save earnest love which from true faith doth spring,
And with one heart united all mankind
Shall to Thy presence humble homage bring.

The grief that mankind dost exhaust to-day,
The tears that now from human eyes do stream,
All as a summer dew shall pass away,
And into heaven vanish like a dream.

Then nought except Thy praises shalt Thou hear,
Nought save a harmony of joy and love,
Such as the angels who to Thee draw near
Sound through the everlasting homes above;

And then, at that last shout, sublime and high,
Thou shalt see, as we mortals humbly sing,
All doubt, all blasphemy before us fly,
While death itself to our blest harmony
Its last expiring utterance shall bring."

This grand appeal, the cry of a man who longed to believe, but found so much on earth inconsistent with the love and goodness which he knew in his heart to exist, but of which he could not find the tangible proofs, brings the series of his purely poetical works almost to a close. We have already mentioned the 'Dupont et Durand,' a rather uninteresting dialogue between two students, who have had great ambitions which they have signally failed to realise. An ode on the birth of the Comte de Paris shows de Musset in a somewhat adulatory spirit; and the record of 1838 is closed by a rather pretty sonnet to his friend Alfred Tattet:—

"How sweet to be on earth, and life how great a good!
Thou saidst it on the eve of a fair summer day.
So on that charmèd spot, my friend, I heard thee say—
There on the greenest slope of thy belovèd wood.

Our horses in the sun trampled the herbage gay,
And I, in silence wrapt, was riding by thy side,
Leaving my thoughts for chance to carry far and wide,
While still in my heart's depths I to myself did say—
Yes, life is a great good, and joy an ecstasy,
And sweet they are to enjoy when doubt nor care can kill,
And sweet of love and mirth to feast the deity,
When both with flowers, our glass, our love may crowned be:
Sweet it is thirty years to have lived at God's good will;
And sweet, though young in years, thus to be old friends still."

After this there is little to consider. Two stories, 'Sylvia' and 'Simone,' show that, like many other poets, de Musset studied and had no objection to drawing from the 'Decameron' of Boccaccio; and the lyrics include a kind of poetical duel with M. Charles Nodier, chiefly noticeable for the skill with which both combatants handle a rather difficult metre; an ode on 'Mie Prigioni,' referring to his short term of imprisonment; and a farewell to his readers in a sonnet which recalls some of his earlier work.

"To my Reader.

Following the use, friend, of a bygone day,
At each first page I gave thee greeting gay;
To-day I close my book in mood less mild,
For, in good sooth, this age on none has smiled—
A past time's joy, its court'sy flies away,
Kings, conquered gods, and chance's triumphs wild,
Suzon and Rose think me too good to-day,
And old Lamartine treats me like a child.
Politics! ah, in them was all my woe!
There my best enemies would make me go
Red now, to-morrow white. No, not for me!
Who reads must read again, thus says my Muse.
And should two names perchance my song confuse,
Ninette or Ninon let them ever be."

CHAPTER III.

THE FOUR TRAGEDIES.

THE four plays with which we propose to deal as tragedies are the four comedies which, from their philosophy and tragical ending, seem to deserve that name. 'André del Sarto,' 'Lorenzaccio,' 'Les Caprices de Marianne,' and 'On ne badine pas avec l'Amour,' are not without their comic parts, just as in "Hamlet" Shakespeare has put in the scene of the gravediggers; but in all of these, however comedy may be introduced, the whole essence of the play is tragical. It was in a state of mind aggravated into almost feverish energy that de Musset wrote 'André del Sarto,' perhaps the greatest serious effort of his genius.

His first essay, 'La Nuit Vénitienne'—that is to say, the first written for the stage—had been hissed off on its first appearance, and withdrawn. The critics, with the conspicuous exception of Sainte-Beuve, were all against him; and de Musset's answer to those who derided his claims to dramatic authorship was the production of one of the most dramatic and fascinating plays that exist in French literature. The scene of 'André del Sarto' is laid in Florence at a time when

the great painter had been reduced to great difficulties by the extravagances generally ascribed to the influence of his wife. The deplorable story is well known: he had received a large sum of money from the King of France for the purchase of pictures, but the money had been spent, while the pictures remained unpurchased, and the guilty painter was in the position of waiting day by day for the arrival of the king's emissaries sent to demand from him the precious wares which he could not produce. His reputation had been falling; he had but three pupils left, one of them, Cordiani, a youth whom he had greatly assisted, and who was to him a bosom friend. André, in these circumstances, is presented to us in as noble a light as ever an unfortunate man might hope to be portrayed by a sympathetic hand. He has one joy left to him besides the friendship of Cordiani,—his wife Lucrèce, for whom he has beggared himself, and whom he loves with all the enthusiasm of a man who is at once an Italian and an artist.

The *motif* of the drama is entered upon at once, the play opening at night with the complaint of the porter at Del Sarto's house that he has seen a man come from Lucrèce's window. This man is found by one of the other pupils to be Cordiani, the familiar friend of the master whom he is trying to betray. But as Damien, who discovers him, says, "A love like yours has no friends." André has, however, no suspicion: he has full faith in his wife, and is besides much occupied in the hopeless task of raising money to meet the envoys of the King of France, whom he expects every day. A very touching point is here made by the author, somewhat savouring of the old Sophoclean irony, for on being told

of his porter's discovery, his answer is, "I'll speak to Cordiani about it."

The next scene finds Lucrèce in her own room, awaiting a renewal of her lover's visit. André has laughed at his porter's dream, as he thought it, of the night before, but has told him, as a consolation, that he may watch under the windows that night. This instruction given, André goes in to see his wife, who is far from expecting such a visit, and before there has been time for much conversation the door is opened abruptly, and Cordiani appears in great disorder. On seeing André he grasps his hands, but can only stammer out that he has got into a scrape and wants his help. Upon this enter servants, pupils, and others, with the news that Grémio the porter has been killed: Cordiani prudently retires among the crowd, while André is looking for a sword to join in the pursuit of the murderer. As he takes one down from the wall, however, he makes a singular discovery.

"*André.* What's this? My hand is covered with blood! Where does that blood come from?

Lionel. Come with us, master; I'll answer for finding him.

And. Where have I got this blood? my hand is covered with it. Whom have I touched? I touched nobody but—just now. Go away.

Lio. What is it, master? why are we to go away?

And. Go, go, leave me alone. Let no search be made, none, it is useless: I forbid it. Go away all of you, all! do what I tell you—(*They go in silence*). (*Still looking at his hand.*) Covered with blood! Yet—I touched nothing but the hand of Cordiani."

In the next scene Cordiani is discovered alone in a garden on a moonlight night, and after a short dialogue

of the indignant pupils, who cannot understand why their master should wish to hush up Grémio's death, and discuss the matter as they pass along, André himself appears and addresses Cordiani, who confesses his guilt, and offers his breast to André's dagger. But the bereaved one cannot as yet steel his heart to take such a vengeance upon his friend. He addresses him with a tragic calm :—

"*André.* Sit down and listen to me : I was born poor; the luxury you see round me has a bad origin,—'tis from trust-money that I have misapplied. Among so many famous painters I was the only one who survived, still a young man, the age of Michael Angelo, and day by day I see everything going to ruin around me. Rome and Venice still flourish, our country is no longer anything. In vain I struggle against the darkness, the sacred lamp goes out in my hand. Think you it is a little thing for a man who for twenty years has lived by his art, to see that art fall? My studios are deserted, my reputation lost. I have no children, no hope to bind me to life. My health is weak, and the pestilential wind from the east makes me shake like a leaf. Tell me, what had I left in the world? Suppose that in my sleepless nights I had put a dagger to my heart. Tell me, what has restrained me up till now?

Cordiani. No more, André.

And. No one could know how much I loved her. For her I could have fought against an army : to add one pearl to her hair I would have plied a spade or wheeled a barrow. This theft, this deposit of the King of France that they are just coming to ask me for, and which I have not, 'twas for her, to give her a year of happiness and wealth—to see her, for once in my life, in the midst of pleasure, of festivals—'tis for this that I have squandered it. Life was less dear to me than honour, honour itself than Lucrèce's love, her love !—less dear than a smile from her lips, a sparkle of joy

in her eyes. This that you see, Cordiani, this wretched suffering being who is before you, whom you have seen these ten years wandering about these dark porticoes, this is not André del Sarto; 'tis a being maddened, exposed to contempt, to devouring anxieties. At my fair Lucrèce's feet lay another André, young, happy, careless as the wind, free and joyous as a bird of the sky, André's angel, the soul of this lifeless body which moves among men. Do you know now what you have done?

Cor. Yes, I know.

And. That man, Cordiani, you have killed. He will go to-morrow to the tomb with the remains of the old Grémio. The other is still here, and it is he that addresses you."

Continuing in the same bitter but quiet tone, he bids his betrayer go unchallenged and unpunished; but the anger which he has so long suppressed breaks out at last when Cordiani, on leaving, offers him his hand.

"*André.* My hand,—to whom must I give my hand? Have I called thee false friend, traitor to the most sacred oaths? Have I said that thou who killest me wast the man whom, had another done what thou hast done, I should have chosen to defend me? Have I told thee that I had lost this night something besides Lucrèce's love? Have I spoken of another sorrow? See, it is not to Cordiani that I have been speaking: to whom then am I to give my hand?

Cordiani. Thy hand, André; farewell for ever,—but bid me farewell.

And. I cannot: on thy hand there is blood."

Urged by his love for Lucrèce, Cordiani only pretends to go away, and is found by André that very evening hidden in her room. The injured husband then puts an end to concealment, sending his wife to her mother, and saying to the lover, "Ah! you would have my

dishonour made public! It shall be so, sir, it shall be so. But the reparation shall be public too, and woe to that man who makes it necessary."

The next scene takes us to the garden where André and Cordiani fight with swords, and the old friendship speaks in André's heart when he hears the second's words, "Cordiani is wounded!" He rushes to him, crying, "Art thou hurt, my friend?" But when the wounded man is taken away, we have a very touching soliloquy from the victor on the uselessness of this vengeance. It has but left him alone.

"Oh, that deserted house," he cries; "how dreadful it is! When I think of what it was yesterday evening, of what I then had, of what I now have lost! What is vengeance for me? Is this all, that I remain here alone? Who can get new life by taking that of a murderer? Tell me, answer me. Why should I have sent away my wife and killed this man? There is no offended man here; there is but an unhappy one. What care I for your laws of honour? What consolation is it for me that you have invented them for those in my position—have made them a code? Where are my twenty years of happiness? my wife, my friend, the light of my days, the rest of my nights? Here is all that is left me (*looks at his sword*). What dost thou want with me? They call thee the friend of the offended, but there is no offended man here. Let the dew wash the blood off thee (*throwing it away*). Oh, that horrible house! Oh, my God, my God! (*He weeps; a funeral passes.*) Whom do you bury there?

Bearers. Nicholas Grémio.

André. And thou too, my poor old friend, thou too abandonest me."

The next scene shows Cordiani in the street severely wounded, and knocking at the nearest door for shelter

and help. It chances to be the house of Monna Flora del Fede, the mother of Lucrèce, who has gone there after being sent away from her husband's. Finding Cordiani lying helpless on the stone bench outside the door, she takes him into the house, her mother being absent. André enters to see Monna Flora, and though informed that she is not at home, sees lights inside, and through the window perceives Cordiani covered with blood, and supported by Lucrèce. After a contest with Lionel, who wishes to prevent him from entering the house in the state of incoherent excitement into which the events of this terrible night have plunged him, André is at length persuaded to content himself with leaving a letter for his wife, and returns with Lionel to his own house, where he is shortly to receive an important visit.

Very touching is the scene when, on the top of all his domestic troubles, comes the dreaded visit of the envoy of the King of France. As we have already seen, the money entrusted to André for the purchase of pictures has been dissipated in extravagances to give a pleasant and happy life to the faithless Lucrèce. Overwhelmed by her ingratitude and that of his dearest friend, worn out with emotion as well as mere physical exhaustion, the unfortunate painter is little fit to stand on his defence. He makes no attempt, indeed, to defend himself, but acknowledging his fault, attempts to keep Lucrèce's share of the extravagance out of sight, while her name is constantly coming to his lips, and his heart torn with anxiety to receive her answer to his letter.

The envoy comes in with his attendants, and is met by Lionel, André's faithful pupil.

"*Montjoie.* Our business is with André del Sarto. I am the Count de Montjoie, sent by the King of France.

André. The King of France! I have robbed your master, sir. The money he entrusted to me has been squandered, and I have not bought a single picture for him. (*To a servant.*) Has Paolo come?

Mont. Are you speaking seriously?

Lionel. Do not believe it, my lords. My friend André is just now, for certain reasons—an unhappy occurrence—not in a fit state to answer you, or to have the honour of receiving you.

Mont. If such is the case, we will come back some other day.

And. Why? I tell you I have robbed him. I speak most seriously. Lionel, do you not know that I have robbed him? It would make no difference if you came back a hundred times.

Mont. This is incredible.

And. Not at all; it is quite simple. I had a wife—no, no! I mean that I have used the King of France's money as if it had been my own.

Mont. Is this the way you fulfil your promises? Where are the pictures that Francis commissioned you to buy for him?

And. My own are there inside: take them if you like—they are not worth anything. Once I had some genius, or something like genius; but I have always painted too quickly, to get money. But take them all the same. Jean, bring the pictures you will find on the easel. My wife was fond of pleasure, my lords. You will ask the King of France to obtain my extradition—to bring me before his courts of law. Ah, Correggio! There was a painter! He was poorer than I, and yet no picture of his ever came out of the studio one quarter of an hour too early. Honesty! honesty!—that is the grand secret. What an abyss is the heart of women!

Mont. Madness shows in his words. What are we to think? Is this the man who lived at the French Court like

a prince?—the man to whom every one listened as to an oracle on points of architecture and art?

Lio. I am not at liberty to tell you the cause of the state in which you see him. If you are moved by it, be tender with him. (*The two pictures are brought in.*)

And. Ah, here they are! Now, my lords, have them taken away; not that I put any value upon them. Besides, so great a sum as it was—enough to buy Raphaels. Ah! he at least died happy in the arms of his love.

Mont. This is a magnificent picture.

And. Too much haste, too much haste! Take them away; let us have an end of this. Ah! wait a moment. (*He stops the porters.*) You look at me, poor girl (*to the figure of Charity, the subject of the picture*)—you would say farewell to me. This was Charity, my lords. 'Twas the most beautiful, the sweetest of human virtues. Ah! you never had a model; you appeared to me in a dream one mournful night, pale as you are there, in the midst of your dear children who are pressing your breast. Here is one who has just slipped down to the ground, and is gazing on his lovely nurse, while he culls some field-flowers. Give that to your master, my lords. There is my signature at the bottom; it is worth some money. (*To a servant.*) Has Paolo not come?

Servant. No, sir.

And. What can he be doing? He has my life in his hands.

Lio. In the name of heaven, go, my lords! I will bring him to you to-morrow if I can. You can see for yourselves how an unforeseen misfortune has upset his mind.

Mont. We yield to your wishes, sir. Excuse us, and keep your promise. (*Exeunt envoys.*)"

After waiting some time in an agony of anxious expectation for Lucrèce's answer (he has asked her to return to him), André sends another servant, Mathurin,

to the house of Monna Flora to see what is going on, and try to get the reply. No sooner has the man gone than André starts up.

"It is singular,—I never felt anything like this before. I seemed to feel a blow. It seemed to me that Lucrèce was going.

Lionel. Lucrèce going!

André. Yes, I am sure of it; I have just seen her.

Lio. Seen her! where? how?

And. I am sure of it, she is gone."

At this point Mathurin returns, and with some hesitation confirms his master's fears. Cordiani's wound has turned out of no importance, and he and Lucrèce have started off on horseback for Piedmont. The mad despair of the deserted husband is terrible at first, and he swoons away, but on recovering he is deadly calm. He calls Mathurin to him.

"*André.* Listen to me, Mathurin, listen to me, and remember what I tell you. You must take a horse, and go to Monna Flora's to find out for certain the way they took. Start at a gallop—mind you retain these words, don't make me repeat them again; I could not do it: overtake them in the plain, go up to them, Mathurin, and say, 'Why do you fly so fast? the widow of André del Sarto can marry Cordiani.'"

Mathurin departs after one protest, and André, asking for a cup of wine, drinks it "to the death of the arts in Italy," and falls dead, poisoned by a drug which he had managed unperceived to pour into the vessel. The play ends in the abrupt way habitual to de Musset. The scene changes, and Lucrèce and Cordiani are seen rest-

ing in their flight: they are about to mount and continue their course when Mathurin overtakes them, and without the slightest preface repeats to them André's last message, "Why fly ye so fast? the widow of André del Sarto can marry Cordiani."

The profound pathos which inspires this play, the unconquerable love of André for the two worthless beings who have ruined his life and taken away his honour, is so delicate and finely delineated that the reader not only pardons but sympathises with the weakness underneath. The unfaithful wife, the ungrateful and treacherous friend, are both, until the final *éclat*, so dear to their victim that pity for him vanquishes every other feeling. Even after the final discovery he weeps over Cordiani's wound, and begs Lucrèce to return to him; and his final act at the end is not only to get rid of a life of which he is weary, but to lay the world open to the wife who has ruined, deceived, and deserted him. The moral reprobation due to André's original fraud on the King of France becomes but another tragic circumstance in the crowd of miseries that overwhelm him, and, instead of blame, we feel nothing but a heart-rending sympathy for the helpless half-crazed man who stammers out in his interview with Montjoie alternately incoherent confessions of guilt and distracted inquiries for his wife's answer. This sympathy was deep in Alfred de Musset's own character and experiences, and his picture of Del Sarto's tender, trusting, all-believing nature, so easily deceived, so slow to be convinced, is singularly touching. We forget the painter who defrauded Francis I. in the confiding husband and friend for whom such suffering was reserved.

The year in which 'André del Sarto' was published produced also 'Les Caprices de Marianne,'—a play which, though it is interspersed with a good many comic scenes, tells a stern story of love, jealousy, and revenge, and ends with the same tragical abruptness which we have already noted. The character of 'Les Caprices' is very well depicted by the title chosen for it by the auth ;—the capricious changes and fancies of a young woman which bring one lover to his death, and send away in despair and disgust the only man she ever really loves. Under a mask of great demureness and propriety, Marianne, the heroine, married to a rich old man, hides a heart which is far from being satisfied, and a great capability of passion. A woman vacillating between passion and prudence, a husband already jealous, a lover in the depths of despair, and a second and still more interesting hero, his friend, a cousin of Marianne, who is in love with nobody but himself and his comrade Cœlio, but who is the real object of Marianne's affections, are the personages of the drama.

The scene is laid at Naples, and the action begins with the delivery of Cœlio's message of love to Marianne by an old woman, apparently from the works of many writers, ancient and modern, the universal go-between in such cases. The heroine scornfully rejects these overtures, and, going out, is followed into the scene by her old husband Claudio, who confides to his servant his plan of posting a bravo under his garden wall to put an end to the next serenader. A meeting between Cœlio and his friend Octave follows without change of scene in the way peculiar to these short pieces, of which it seems a necessity that the whole

corps dramatique should meet in succession in the same place. This is terminated by the entrance of Marianne, at whose sight Cœlio withdraws; while Octave, strong in the force of friendship, accosts her in a gay and rather impudent manner, and urges his friend's love-suit. Marianne spends more time in answering her cousin's arguments than she gave to the old woman, but eventually she leaves him, saying that "it is a joke which has lasted long enough." He has, however, so entirely constituted himself Cœlio's advocate, that the discussion is renewed from time to time. One of Octave's disputes with Marianne is worth reproducing here, for it is a scene which had a remarkable effect upon de Musset himself, interested as he was in the character which most people have identified with him. The scene in question shows Octave under the balcony of an inn, having ordered a bottle of good wine and sent the waiter for a girl called Rosalinde to come and help him to drink it. Cœlio passes and refuses to join him, while the waiter returns saying that Rosalinde cannot come. Octave is thus left to drink by himself, and is engaged in so doing when Marianne appears.

"*Marianne.* Still here, Octave, and already at table? Is it not rather dull to get drunk by one's self?

Octave. The whole world is deserting me; I try to see double, so as to give myself some company.

Mar. How? not one of your friends, not one of your mistresses, to come and console you under this most fearful burden, solitude?

Oct. Shall I tell you my thoughts? I sent for one Rosalinde; but she is supping in town like a person of quality.

Mar. How sad for you! your heart must feel a dreadful void.

Oct. A feeling which I could not explain, and which I am vainly trying to communicate to this big cup. The vesper chimes have split my head for the evening.

Mar. Tell me, my cousin, is it cheap wine you are drinking?

Oct. Don't laugh at me,—it is Lacrima Christi, the best.

Mar. I can't make out why you don't drink wine at a shilling a bottle: do drink it, I implore you.

Oct. Why should I drink it?

Mar. Try it, at least; I am sure there is no difference.

Oct. As great a difference as between the sun and a lantern.

Mar. No, I tell you; it is the same thing.

Oct. God forbid! You are laughing at me, I suppose.

Mar. You think, then, that there is a great difference?

Oct. Surely.

Mar. Yet I thought it was the same with wine as with women. Is not a woman also a precious vase, sealed as this glass bottle? Does she not contain a frenzy coarse or divine according to her strength and her value? Are there not among them the wine of the people and the Lacrima Christi? What a wretched heart you must have, if your lips can show it an example. You would not drink the wine the people drink, you love the woman the people love; the generous and poetic spirit of this gilded flask, this wonderful juice to which the lava of Vesuvius has given life under the burning sun, will lead you staggering into the arms of a woman of the streets. You would blush to drink a coarse wine, the thought would make you sick. Ah! your lips are delicate, but your heart is cheaply excited. Good night, cousin; I hope Rosalinde will come back to-night.

Oct. One word, lovely Marianne, for heaven's sake; my answer will be brief. How long do you think we must pay our court to the bottle that you see here to obtain its favours? It is, as you say, full of a heavenly spirit, and the people's wine is as like it as the peasant is to his lord. Yet see how complaisant it is! This beauty has, I suppose, re-

ceived no education, has no principles; see what a liberal creature she is. One word was enough to free her from her convent; dusty still, she has escaped from it to me, to give me a quarter of an hour of forgetfulness, and then to die. Her virgin crown of fragrant purple wax has fallen at once into dust, and, I cannot hide it from you, she almost passed altogether on my lips in the ardour of her first kiss.

Mar. Are you sure that she is any the better for that? And if you are one of her true lovers, would you not go, if the receipt were lost, to seek the last drop of her even in the mouth of the volcano?

Oct. She is neither the better nor the worse. She knows that she is good to drink, and that she is made to be drunk. God has not hidden her source at the top of an inaccessible peak, nor at the bottom of a deep cavern; He has hung it up in golden bunches on the side of your highways: there she plays the courtesan, she touches the hand of the passer-by; she displays to the rays of the sun her rounded throat, and about her from morn till evening murmurs a whole court of bees and drones. The traveller worn out with thirst can lie down under her green boughs,—never has she left him to languish, never refused him the sweet tears of which her heart is full. Ah! Marianne, beauty is a fatal gift!—the wisdom that it boasts is sister to avarice, and heaven has more mercy for its weaknesses than for its cruelty. Good evening, cousin mine; may Cœlio forget you!"

Another interview and conversation with Claudio, who is now getting jealous of Octave, drives Marianne almost wild. Her husband avows his suspicions, and threatens her with some mysterious punishment. She remonstrates, and the moment Claudio leaves her, sends out a servant to tell Octave to come to her. When he finds, on coming, that she is anxious to revenge herself on her husband, he again pleads eloquently and ener-

getically for Cœlio, of whom Marianne will not hear a word. She gives, however, her scarf to Octave, with the significant words that any friend of his who ties the scarf round his arm that night will find her door open. Octave sees that the invitation is meant for himself, but goes away determined that Cœlio shall profit by it. Meanwhile Claudio, who has overheard this conversation, posts two bravos in the garden; and Marianne, discovering this, sends a warning letter to Octave, which he never receives. Not knowing of these hostile preparations, Cœlio makes his way into the garden, and is horrified by hearing Marianne whisper, "Octave, fly! did you not get my letter?"

"*Cœlio.* Oh, Lord God! what name was that I heard?

Marianne. The house is surrounded by assassins; my husband saw you come in this evening; he listened to our conversation, and your death is certain if you stop here a moment longer.

Cœl. Is it a dream? Am I Cœlio?

Mar. Octave, Octave, in the name of heaven don't stop here! May it be time yet for you to escape! To-morrow at noon be in one of the confessionals of the church—I will be there."

Cœlio, thinking himself betrayed by his friend Octave, goes out in utter and careless despair, and falls into the ambush prepared by Claudio for his wife's lover. Octave arrives to rescue him, but too late.

The short interview between Octave and Marianne which ends the play is so dramatic, that it seems more suited for blank verse than prose, and it is so given below. The two are alone together by Cœlio's tomb.

" *Octave.* None in the world could know him as I did:
This alabaster urn, with its long veil
Of mourning black, his perfect image is.
'Twas thus that a sweet melancholy veiled
The merits of that tender, delicate soul.
To me alone the silence of his life
Has been no mystery. All those evenings long
That we have spent together, are to me
As fresh oases in a desert; they
Have shed upon my heart the only dew
That ever fell upon it. Cœlio
Was the best part of me; that went to heaven
With him. He to another age belonged;
He knew our pleasures, but preferred to them
His darling solitude. He knew how far
Illusions can deceive us, yet his own
Preferred to keep than yield to cruel truth.
How blest would she have been who had loved him!
Marianne. And would not she be blest who should love you?
Oct. I know not how to love—Cœlio alone
Could love. The ashes in this tomb enclosed
Are all that I have ever loved on earth,
All I shall ever love; for he alone
Knew how to shed into another's heart
The streams of happiness that flowed in his:
A limitless devotion none but he
Could understand; to her whom he could love
As easily would he devote his life
As he would face death for her. What am I?
A heartless debauchee—I am no more:
Woman awakes no chord within my breast,
The love that I inspire, like that I feel,
Is but the passing frenzy of a dream.
I know not of the secrets that he knew;
My gaiety is like an actor's mask,—
My heart is older than it, my tired sense
Will none of it. I am a coward, too;
His death is not avenged.

Mar. How could it be,
Octave, save at the risk of your own life?
Claudio's too old to meet you in the field;
Too powerful in this town to fear your feud.
Octave. Had I been dead for Cœlio, as he now
Is dead for me, he'd have avenged my death.
This tomb is mine; 'tis I 'neath this cold stone
They have stretched out; 'twas against me their swords
They whetted, me they killed. Farewell my youth,
My thoughtless recklessness, my joyous life
'Neath old Vesuvius; my noisy feasts,
My evening talks, my nightly serenades
To gilded balconies: Naples, farewell,
Thou and thy ladies, and thy masquerades
Lit by gay torches, and beneath the trees
Thy lengthened suppers! Farewell, too, to love
And friendship: on the earth my place is void.
Mar. Not in my heart, Octave; why say farewell
To love?
Oct. I do not love you, Marianne;
'Twas Cœlio that loved you."

Here is again the same element of abruptness, the same sharp yet broken note of sudden conclusion, which was visible in 'André del Sarto,' and will again be found in 'On ne badine pas,' &c. The one dramatic incident being complete, the play comes to an end with almost a shock—in a sharp and sudden word—the very utterance of human confusion and despair. Marianne has failed in her love; Octave has failed in his friendship, though by no fault of his own; and even Claudio has failed in his vengeance, having murdered the man whom Marianne did not love. And there it ends, where the limit of possibility has been reached, without weakening the keen pang of the catastrophe, the horror of disap-

pointment and foiled purpose by explanations. De Musset is recorded, when asked from whom he took the character of Marianne, to have answered, "She is no one woman, she is woman." If bitter experience can make a judge, he had known enough of the being whom he called by that name in subsequent years to be able to form a very good opinion.

There is a very curious and characteristic difference between the two tragedies which were the next production of de Musset's genius, showing the continual variations in the bent of the poet's mind,—in the first instance dressing a sad story in light badinage and the little quarrels of young lovers, until with a fearful suddenness the catastrophe comes, and the heroine, finding out how deep and fatal have been the consequences of her thoughtless trifling, flies from the scene never to see her lover again; in the next, drawing the darker picture of a long-premeditated vengeance. It would seem to have been de Musset's purpose to work out in all these dramas the different mysteries of human woe: now it is Cœlio's faithful and steadfast love baffled by the waywardness of Marianne; then André's warm heart torn by ingratitude and deceit. And now we are shown how the thoughtless, joyous life of youth may be all of a sudden swallowed up in the fatal cloud of mourning and separation: and how a long-projected, perfectly executed, and even self-sacrificing plan of vengeance may succeed in itself, without attaining any one of its special ends.

The story of Lorenzo dei Medici, the young scion of a royal family who conceives the idea of freeing Italy by killing one of the tyrants who were oppressing her,

is well known. Dumas, in 'Une Nuit à Florence,' deals with the same subject. Circumstances having made him select his own kinsman, Alexander dei Medici, the Duke of Florence, for the necessary victim, Lorenzo follows the historical example of Lucius Brutus, and devotes all his endeavours to acquire for himself the character of a heartless, useless rake, fainting at the sight of a drawn sword, so as to attract no suspicion. Thus in all Alexander's vicious enterprises Lorenzo is at his side, helping him as go-between or in any other way he can, and so getting himself the name in Florence of an utterly worthless hanger-on, as vicious as the Duke himself, but without his courage. Only one of the Republican party knows what there is at the bottom of Lorenzo's masquerade, and to him, old Philip Strozzi, in a long conversation, which furnishes the *motif* of the whole play, Lorenzo opens his heart, and, while relating the history of his mind, reveals his doubts as to whether his schemes, even if brought to a successful end, will ever achieve what the party who are opposed to Alexander want, or think they want. That these doubts are fully realised is shown in the end of the play, but at the time Philippe thinks otherwise, and he alone has any grounds for understanding Lorenzaccio.

The play—in which, contrary to French custom, and probably with an idea of following the Shakespearian model, de Musset, as in 'On ne badine pas avec l'Amour,' has inserted various comic episodes, which, while helping on the play by giving a lighter interlude among its many tragical scenes, seem at first sight incongruous—begins with the abduction by Alexander, aided by Lorenzo, of a girl in Florence, thus showing

at once the depraved character of the Duke and his kinsman's apparent subserviency. We get the thread of an inner plot in a quickly following scene, which discloses the intrigues of the Cardinal Cibo to make his sister-in-law, the Marquise de Cibo, the mistress of Alexander, in order, through her, to get influence over the Duke. The part played by the Cardinal throughout the play is a disgraceful one. Of de Musset's ideas about the Church we know really nothing; but the action of the Cardinal later on, when he urges his brother's wife to continue to be the Duke's mistress, after she has confessed to him that she has yielded, and threatens her with publicity on the ground of having seen things when he was in concealment in her rooms, which were such as to free him from the seal of confession, is altogether abominable. These scenes, however, are quite subsidiary to the main movement of the play, and only serve to exhibit the depravity of the time. We are soon brought to the national and political situation by the din of a quarrel between two great Florentine families—the Strozzi and the Salviati. Julian Salviati insults a young lady of the Strozzi family, and talks coarsely about her in public before a relation. The family hear of it and kill Salviati, and shortly afterwards Louise Strozzi is poisoned. Thus a personal feud of the bitterest character is added to the many divisions already existing in the popular party—a division so strong that in a later scene the infant representatives of the two families, meeting in their walk with their respective tutors, indulge in a somewhat severe fight, while the tutors aforesaid are trying to carry on a philosophical discussion.

Curiously enough, and yet with true poetic insight, it is from the lips of Lorenzo's mother that the first description of him comes, showing what he had been, and how wonderfully he had managed in his life to deceive even those who knew him best. This occurs in a conversation with Catherine Ginori, her sister-in-law, who is however so much younger that she calls Marie mother. They are discussing the incident now well known throughout Florence, of Lorenzo's swoon at the sight of a sword, and Catherine begins:—

"I say to myself, in spite of myself, that all is not dead in him.

Marie (LORENZO'S *mother*). I cannot understand it. So easy in his temper, with so sweet a love of solitude! I always said, 'My Renzo will never be a warrior,' when I saw him come back from college with his big books under his arm; but a holy love of truth shone on his lips and in his dark eyes. He could not help taking an interest in others, saying constantly, 'That man is poor, this one ruined,—what can we do?' And then his admiration for the great men in Plutarch! Catherine, Catherine, how often have I kissed his forehead, thinking of the father of his country!

Catherine. Let not this distress you.

Mar. I tell you that I do not wish to speak of him, yet I am always doing it. There are things which mothers must talk about until the Eternal silence. If my son had been a common debauchee, if in this weak drop fallen from my veins the blood of the Soderini had lost its colour, I should not despair; but I had hopes, and I had reason to hope. Ah, Catherine! he is no longer even handsome; like an unwholesome smoke, the soiling of his heart has spread up to his face. The smile, that sweet unfolding which makes youth resemble the flowers, has left his cheeks, now yellow as sulphur, to let an ignoble irony and contempt of all things sit scowling there.

Cath. Sometimes he still looks handsome in his strange melancholy.

Mar. Did not his birth call him to a throne? might he not have brought to it the learning of a graduate, the most beautiful youth of the world, and crowned with a golden diadem all my darling dreams? Had I not a right to such a hope? Ah, Cattina! if you wish to sleep quietly, there are certain dreams which you must never have dreamt. Oh! 'tis too cruel to have lived in a fairy palace, amid the murmuring of angels' chants, to have gone to sleep there rocked in the arms of your son, and to awake in a blood-stained hovel, full of the fragments of a feast and of human remains, in the arms of a hideous spectre which kills you, calling you all the time by the name of mother!"

To but one of the Republican leaders, as has been said, Lorenzo opens his heart. The Strozzi were one of the oldest families in Florence, and, at this time, perhaps the most strongly opposed to the tyranny of the Duke Alexander. The head of this great family — mainly perhaps for the reason that there exists the greatest difference not only between their ages but between their methods of life, and even their ideas about the state of Florence, and the proper remedy for it, together with an entire agreement that something must be done—is Lorenzo's chosen confidant. Philip's long experience and wisdom afford a ground of discussion and explanation which does not exist with the younger members of the family, who confine their expressions of patriotism to drinking damnation to Alexander, and occasionally killing a family enemy, or with the more ignorant and time-serving Republicans, who are perhaps earnest in the desire that the Duke should be at least dethroned, but who hold Lorenzaccio in the

greatest contempt, and would as soon expect their deliverance from him as from the meanest insect that crawled at their feet. Lorenzo confides the strange history of his life, and the reason of the vile debauchery in which, to the eyes of all Florence, he is lost, to this grave and sympathetic listener. To Philip he appeals, as to a learned man, to the example of Lucius Brutus, who, had he not pretended successfully before men to be a fool, might never have brought about his great project and freed his native land: and the old chief of the Strozzi, shocked at first by the undisguised frankness with which Lorenzo reveals the secrets of his life, the causes of his self-abasement, the sorrows of his enforced viciousness, comes first to words of consolation, and at last, as the young patriot continues his revelation, to expressions of praise and thanks. Their conversation, which is the key to the rest of the play, shows the changes in Philip's heart, and the development from confusion and bewilderment to comprehension as Lorenzo goes on. The wild talk of the young man, full of the most deadly seriousness, yet with a terrible flying foam of jest—his strange advices to the other, so much older than himself, yet so much more innocent—the gleams of desperate gaiety through his despair,—give a wonderful picture of the half-maddened yet terribly earnest enthusiast, the visionary without moral guide or balance, overborne by the impulse of one terrible idea: while Philip's wonder and dismay, the confusion in his mind, his half-stupefied acquiescence now, and now rebellion against the young man's horrible creed, and all the changes through which he is driven, form an extraordinary and most vivid contrast, and make the whole

scene exceedingly dramatic and powerful. The old man has just uttered a phrase of general philanthropy when the young man, in his horrible cynicism and knowledge, takes him up, half in banter, half in the fury of his heart.

"*Lorenzo.* Beware, Philip! thou hast thought of the happiness of mankind."

He goes on to tell him that to-morrow or next day he will kill Alexander.

"*Philip.* If that is true, why should I be wrong in thinking of liberty? Will she not come when thou hast struck thy blow, if thou dost strike it?

Lor. Philip, beware! thou hast sixty years of virtue on thy grey head: 'tis too great a stake to put on a throw of the dice.

Phil. If in these dark words thou hidest something I can understand, tell me: thou vexest me strangely.

Lor. Such as thou seest me, Philip, I have been honest. I have believed in virtue, in human greatness, as a martyr believes in his God. I have shed over poor Italy more tears than Niobe shed over her children.

Phil. Well, Lorenzo?

Lor. My youth was pure as gold. During twenty years of silence the thunder grew in my heart, the thunder to which I must be akin, for all at once, one night when I was sitting in the ruins of the old Coliseum, I rose, I know not why; I stretched to heaven my arms, drenched with the dew, and I swore that one of the tyrants of my country should die by my hand. I was then a peaceful student, occupying myself with nothing but the arts and sciences, and I cannot tell how this strange vow found birth in me. Perhaps it is what happens when one falls in love.

Phil. I have always believed in you, but yet I seem to be in a dream.

Lor. Yes. I was happy then; my heart and hands alike

were at rest, my name called me to a throne, and I had but to let the sun rise and set to see all human hopes flowering around me. Mankind had done me neither good nor harm, but I was good, and to my eternal misfortune I wished to be great. I must confess it, if Providence has pushed me to destroy a tyrant, whichever he might be, my pride has moved me too. What can I say more? Every Cæsar in the world made me think of a Brutus."

After Lorenzo has further explained the growth of this idea in his mind—how, banished from Rome before he had the chance of carrying out his intention to kill Pope Clement VII., he had directed his plans against Alexander dei Medici, and now had him in his power—the conversation continues :—

"*Philip.* If what thou sayest be true, thou art our Brutus.

Lorenzo. I have thought myself a Brutus, my poor Philip; I have remembered the golden staff covered with bark. Now I know mankind, and my advice to thee is not to meddle with it.

Phil. Why?

Lor. Oh, Philip, you have lived alone. Like a bright beacon, you have stood still at the edge of the ocean of mankind, and you have gazed in the waters at the reflection of your own light. From the depths of your solitude, to you the sea seemed magnificent under the splendid canopy of heaven: you did not count each wave, you did not cast the lead, confidently you trusted in the work of God. But I, during this time, have dived; I have plunged deep into this stormy sea of life; covered with my diving-bell, I have wandered through all the depths, while you were admiring the surface. I have seen the broken wreckage, the skeletons, and the sea-monsters.

Phil. Thy sadness pierces me to the heart.

Lor. 'Tis because I see you such as I have been, and on the point of doing what I have done, that I speak to you in

this way. I do not despise mankind; where books and historians are wrong, is that they show it to us different from what it really is. Life is like a great city; one may live there for fifty or sixty years without seeing anything but the promenades and the palaces, but you must not enter the gambling-hells, or stop on your way home at the windows in the low quarters. Here is my advice, Philip: if you only want to save your children, I tell you to wait quietly; it is the best way to get them sent back to you after a slight reprimand. But if you wish to try something for the people, my advice to you is to cut off your arms, for you will see before long that you are the only man that has any.

Phil. I can conceive that the part thou art playing has given thee these ideas. If I understand thee rightly, thou hast, with a sublime end in view, chosen a hideous path, and thinkest that everything is like what thou hast seen.

Lor. I have awakened from my dreams, that is all, and I tell you the danger of dreaming. I know life, and, believe me, it's a bad business; if you expect anything, don't put your hand into it.

Phil. My poor child, thou grievest me to the heart. But, if thou art honest, when thou hast delivered thy country thou wilt become so again. That rejoices my heart, Lorenzo, to feel that thou art honest; then thou wilt throw away the hideous disguise that disfigures thee, and become again of a metal as pure as that of the statues of Harmodius and Aristogeiton.

Lor. Philip, Philip, I have been honest. The hand which has once raised the veil of truth cannot let it fall back again. She remains motionless till death, ever holding up this terrible veil and raising it more and more over the man's head, until the angel of the eternal rest closes his eyes.

Phil. All maladies can be healed, and vice is also a malady.

Lor. Too late. I have accustomed myself to my trade. Vice was to me a garment, now it is glued to my skin. I

am in very truth a rake, and while I joke about my fellows, I am myself as serious as death in the midst of my gaiety. Brutus played the madman to kill Tarquin, and my surprise is that he did not lose his own reason in the task. Profit by my example, Philip—this is what I have to tell thee; work not for thy country.

Phil. Did I believe thee, it seems to me that the heavens would grow dark for ever, and that my old age would be doomed to grope out its way. Granted that thou mayest have chosen out a dangerous path, why should I not choose another which could lead me to the same end? My intention is to appeal to the people, and act openly.

Lor. Beware, Philip! he who says this to you knows why he says it. Whatever way you choose, you will always have to deal with men.

Phil. I believe in the honesty of the Republicans.

Lor. I will make a bet with you. I am going to kill Alexander: my blow once struck, it will be easy for the Republicans, if they behave as they ought, to establish a Republic, the most beautiful that ever has flourished upon earth. Let them only have the people with them, and all is said. I'll bet you that neither they nor the people will do anything. All that I ask of you is to have nothing to do with it. Leave me to strike my blow. I have nothing to lose.

Phil. Do it, and thou shalt see.

Lor. So be it; but remember this. Seest thou in that little house the family assembled round a table? Would you not call them men? They have bodies, and in each body a heart. Yet, if I took a fancy to go into their house alone, as I am, and plunge my dagger into their eldest son's heart in their midst, no knife would be raised against me."

Left alone, Lorenzo begins to meditate upon the end which he has proposed to himself, and which he knows will be achieved in vain. He knows perfectly well, as he has said to Philip, that the murder of Alexander

which he has set before himself as the great thing to be done, will be followed by indolent indifference on the part of those for whom he is going to act, and who have in their hearts rather the theory of patriotism than the practical sense which leads to action. He knows perfectly well, as he says, that the popular party will never be willing to rise when he has thus opened the way, and yet he must do the deed; in his own words he expresses his wonder at this necessity, and his willingness to act.

"Of what tiger did my mother dream before she gave me birth? When I think that I used to love the flowers, the meadows, the sonnets of Petrarch, the spectre of my youth rises shuddering before me. O God! why does this one word 'this evening,' make this joy penetrate into my very bones, burning as a red-hot iron? From what wild womb, from what savage union am I sprung? What had this man done to me? When I lay my brow on my hands and think —Will any one hear me say to-morrow, 'I have killed him,' without answering, 'Why hast thou killed him?' 'Tis very strange; to others he has done ill, to me good, in his way at least. Had I remained quiet in the depths of my solitude at Caffagliuolo, he would not have come to look for me: but I have come to look for him in Florence. Why? Did the ghost of my father lead me on as an Orestes against a new Ægisthus? Had he offended me then? 'Tis strange, but for this one act I have left everything; at the one thought of this murder the dreams of my life have fallen into dust; I have been but a wreck since this deadly purpose, like an ill-omened raven, has perched upon my path and called to me. What can it mean? Just now, passing along the square, I heard two men talking of a comet. Are they really the beatings of a human heart that I feel here beneath the frame of my chest? Oh, why does this idea come to me so often of late? Am I the arm of God? Is

there a halo round my head? When I go into this room, when I am going to draw my sword from its sheath, I fear that I may draw the flaming brand of the Archangel, and fall in ashes on my prey."

Lorenzo follows out his idea by announcing at the houses of the leaders of the Republican party that he is going to kill Alexander that night. The scene in which he does this is a very dramatic illustration of his conviction that the terrible deed which he contemplates will have no political issue—a conviction which does not affect his wild and despairing resolve. He goes first to the house of the Signor Alamanno, presaging his failure by the words, "Here is the sun setting, I have no time to lose, and yet all this is very like lost time." He shouts at Alamanno's window that Alexander is to be killed that night by his hand, but is met only by an invitation to come in and join the company; and when he repeats the strange announcement that he is going to kill the Duke, is scoffed at as a drunken fellow. He then goes on to the Pazzi Palace, where, concealing the part he is going to play, he simply announces that Alexander will be killed that night, and is told that he is mad. He goes on again to the Proveditore Corsini with the same news, and is repulsed with abuse. Thus bitterly convinced of the fact which he had held as a theory, sick and scornful of the indifference of those for whom he is risking his life, Lorenzo rushes out with the wild despairing cry, "Poor Florence, poor Florence!"

For some time Lorenzo has been carrying on in his rooms noisy and violent scenes of fencing and sword-play with Scoroconcolo, a bandit whom he has made his

own, so that the neighbours, accustomed to the daily uproar, are not likely to be disturbed by any particular noise on the day of the murder. The bait to draw the Duke to Lorenzo's rooms is supposed to be Catherine Ginori, his mother's sister, to whom Alexander believes that his parasite has been making addresses on his behalf. This, however, is not the case, the additional insult of the suggestion having fired Lorenzo's energy, and determined him to use the Duke's love to draw him to his death. Alexander arrives, but while awaiting Catherine is stabbed by Lorenzo, whom even at the last moment he cannot believe to be in earnest. It illustrates the supposed cowardice of the murderer's character that he has taken the precautions of stealing the coat of mail which the Duke always wore, and taking away his sword. The Duke is killed by Lorenzo without the aid of the bravo, and the two contrive to fly together.

In the next scene we are introduced into the great hall of the council. The council waits, the Duke comes not; Giomo, Alexander's Hungarian servant, then rushes in with the news that the Duke has been found murdered in Lorenzo's rooms. The council agree to conceal it for fear of disturbance, and proceed to discuss the appointment of a successor, in which task they are anticipated by Cardinal Cibo, who, without consulting the rest, writes to Cosmo dei Medici, Alexander's nearest relative. Meanwhile Lorenzo, who has fled to Venice, hastens to his friend Philip Strozzi, whom he finds there, newly convinced of his son's treasonable correspondence with France.

"*Lorenzo.* Philip, I bring thee the finest of the Crown jewels.

Philip. What is that you throw on the floor? A key?

Lor. That key opens my room; and in that room lies Alexander dei Medici, dead by this hand.

Phil. Is that true?—true? It is incredible!

Lor. Believe it if you like. You will know it by others besides me.

Phil. (*taking the key*). Alexander dead! Is it possible?

Lor. What would you say if the Republicans offered you to be duke in his place?

Phil. I should say, No, my friend!

Lor. Is it true?—true? 'Tis incredible.

Phil. Why, that is quite simple for me.

Lor. As it was for me to kill Alexander. Why will you not believe me?

Phil. Oh, our new Brutus! I believe thee, and I embrace thee. Liberty is then saved! Yes, I believe thee; thou art as thou hast told me. Give me thy hand. The Duke is dead! Ah! there is no hate in my joy; there is nothing but the most pure, the most sacred love for my country; God is my witness.

Lor. Come, calm yourself; nothing is saved but myself, who have had my loins broken by the Bishop de Marzi's horses.

Phil. Did you not warn our friends? Have they not now their swords in their hands?

Lor. I warned them; I knocked at all the Republican doors with the persistency of a begging brother; I told them to rub up their swords—that when they woke Alexander would be dead. I suppose that at this moment they have woken up more than once, and gone to sleep again as if nothing was the matter. In truth, that is all I think about it.

Phil. Have you told the Pazzi? Have you told the Corsini?

Lor. I told everybody; I believe I might have told the moon, so sure was I of not being listened to.

Phil. What do you mean?

Lor. I mean that they shrugged their shoulders, and went back to their dinners, their dice, or their wives.

109772

Phil. You did not, then, explain things to them?

Lor. What the devil could I explain? Ha! I, do you think, an hour to waste with each of them? I said to them, 'Be prepared,' and I did my business.

Phil. And you think the Pazzi will do nothing? How do you know? You have no news since you left, and many days have gone since you started.

Lor. I think that the Pazzi are doing something; I think they are fencing in their hall—drinking from time to time, if their throats chance to be dry, some wine of the south.

Phil. You stick to your bet; was not that the bet you wanted to make with me? Be easy; I have better hopes.

Lor. I am easy—easier than I can tell you.

Phil. Why did you not come out with the Duke's head in your hand? The people would have followed you as their saviour and their chief.

Lor. I left the stag to the hounds: let them manage that business themselves.

Phil. You would have deified mankind, had you not despised them.

Lor. I don't despise them—I know them. I am thoroughly convinced that there are among them very few very wicked, a great many cowards, and a vast number of indifferent. Some fierce ones there are also, like the men of Pistoia, who have found in this business a little opportunity of murdering all their chancellors in broad daylight in the streets. I heard that scarcely an hour ago.

Phil. I am full of joy and hope. My heart beats in spite of myself.

Lor. All the better for you.

Phil. As you know nothing about it, why talk like this? 'Tis certain that every man is not capable of great actions, but all can appreciate them: you cannot deny the history of the universe. No doubt it wants a spark to set light to a forest; but the spark may start from a stone, and the forest takes fire. 'Tis thus the flash of one sword may light up a whole age.

Lor. I do not deny the history.

Phil. Let me call thee Brutus; if I am dreaming, leave me that dream. Oh, my friends, my compatriots! you can make a fine deathbed for the old Strozzi, if you will.

Lor. Why do you open the window?

Phil. Don't you see a messenger arriving? My Brutus, my great Lorenzo, liberty is in the air: I feel it, I breathe it.

Lor. Philip, Philip, none of that. Shut your window. All these words hurt me.

Phil. I think there is a crowd in the street; a crier is reading a proclamation. Ho, Jean! go and buy the paper from that crier.

Lor. O God! O God!

Phil. You are getting as pale as a corpse. What is the matter with you?

Lor. Did you not hear anything?

(*A servant comes in, bringing the proclamation.*)

Phil. No; look at this paper, which they are crying in the street.

Lor. (*reads.*) 'To any man, noble or of low blood, who shall kill Lorenzo dei Medici, traitor to the country, and murderer of his master, in whatever place or manner, over all the surface of Italy, the Council of Eight at Florence does promise—(i) four thousand florins in gold, without any abatement; (ii) one hundred florins a-year, to himself during his life, and, after his death, to his heirs in direct line; (iii) permission to exercise all the offices, to possess all the benefices and privileges of the State, in spite of his birth if he is of low blood; (iv) pardon in perpetuity for all his faults, past or future, ordinary or extraordinary.

'Signed by the hand of The Eight.'

Well, Philip, you would not believe just now that I had killed Alexander? You see that I have killed him.

Phil. Silence! some one is coming up the stairs. Hide yourself in this closet."

The next and final scene occurs after an interval during which the crisis at Florence has passed over,

and a new Duke succeeded the old without any revolution. Lorenzo appears once more in the lodging of Philip Strozzi, holding a letter which informs him of his mother's death. He asks Philip to take a walk in the country with him, and is implored by the other to keep quiet and avoid any danger. This he scorns.

"*Lorenzo.* At the time when I was going to kill Clement VII., a price was set on my head at Rome; it is only natural that, now that I have killed Alexander, it should be so throughout all Italy. Were I to leave the country, I should soon be trumpeted all over Europe; and when I die, the Almighty will undoubtedly post up my condemnation in all the squares of the infinite.

Philip. Your gaiety is sad as the night. You are not changed, Lorenzo.

Lor. No, truly. I wear the same clothes, I still walk on my legs, and yawn with my mouth. Only a trifle is changed in me—that is, that I am more hollow and empty than a cast-metal statue.

Phil. Let us go away together.—Become a man again. You are young still, though you have done much.

Lor. I am older than Saturn's grandfather. Come, I pray you, and take a walk with me.

Phil. Your mind is torturing itself in inaction, that is your ill. You have had strokes of ill-luck, my friend.

Lor. You are right. The indifference of the Republicans at Florence was one stroke, a great one, to me. That a hundred young students, brave and resolute men, should have given their lives in vain; that Cosmo, a vegetable planter, should have been unanimously elected—oh! I confess it, I confess it, these are strokes which deserve no pardon, and place me greatly in the wrong.

Phil. Don't let us argue about a thing which is not yet worked out. The chief thing for you is to get out of Italy. Your work in the world is not finished.

Lor. I was a machine constructed for murder—but for one murder only.

Phil. Was it that murder alone that gave you happiness? Come! even if you must only be an honest man, an artist, why wish to die?

Lor. I can only say what I said before,—I have been honest. Perhaps I might become so again, had I not fallen into this low state of carelessness. I am still fond of wine and women: 'tis enough, truly, to make me a rake, but not enough to make me wish to be one. Come out, I beg you."

In going out, however, Lorenzo is killed by a bravo lurking behind the door, who rushes out and stabs him. And thus the wild and fantastic tragedy ends. This distracted Hamlet of the South, unlike the nobler image of Shakespeare, is the only personage in the drama whose passion and force come to any issue at all. He stands alone against the dulness, the indolence, the slow intelligence, the indifference of the world, driven to the wild act which is as a fever in his blood, with full perception of the unlikelihood of any issue; at once an idealist and a philosopher, an enthusiast and a cynic. While Hamlet stands despairing before the impossibility of righting wrong by mere punishment and vengeance, Lorenzo, hot and impassioned, comes to the same conclusion by other means. He will strike the blow, but it will produce no result, since no one will be ready to follow it up. Alexander is removed at the cost of Lorenzo's life and hope and happiness; but Cosmo succeeds, as if neither Alexander had been the victim nor Lorenzo the executioner. The contrast and resemblance are very curious and interesting: the visionary whose heart is sick with the impossibilities of life, and that he was ever born to set them right; and the visionary

whose dreams are all hot with blood, and who means to cut the knots with a stroke of a dagger, yet knows he will be baffled by the dull humanity around him. The fantastic element in the character of Lorenzaccio, the wild wit and badinage of despair, are very characteristic of de Musset. While the English hero but puts on madness, the Frenchman is distracted with a pressure at once of passion and philosophy too great for him, and mingles a mocking, miserable laugh with his despair. We say Frenchman—for Lorenzaccio is of the country of his creator, not of his birth. The sole record which that Lorenzo dei Medici left behind him is a most curious and subtle piece of argument, which seems entirely wanting in the mad mirth of de Musset's hero.

When he had thus shown us the catastrophe of a long-meditated and tragic plan, turned into folly by the ordinary train of events, the poet turns to show how a like tragedy may suddenly overwhelm the lightest strain of youthful existence. Whether he had any formal intention in this contrast it is impossible to tell, but it is a curious antithesis. 'On ne badine pas avec l'Amour' begins in the easiest strain of comedy—with the meeting of a young pair intended to marry each other, who have both been absent from home for years for the purposes of education. As in 'Lorenzaccio,' the underplots connected with Alexander's amours and the feud between the Strozzi and Salviati families have been omitted, as interfering with the main story of Lorenzo and Alexander; so in this play the scenes of what would now in England be

termed "low comedy," in which Maître Blasius and Maître Bridaine figure, need hardly be noticed while considering the fortunes of Camille, Rosette, and Perdican. It may here be noted that in 'On ne badine pas avec l'Amour' de Musset introduces the chorus of the ancients, as Shakespeare does in some of his plays.

Perdican and Camille arrive at his father's country-house on the same day—he from Paris, where he has just taken his degree, and has come of age; she from the convent, where she was being educated, to receive the fortune inherited by her from her mother. The Baron, Perdican's father, has conceived the idea of marrying the two young people to each other, and makes preparations for their meeting, so as to impress the young novice with the merits of his son at first sight. True, they have been friends—have even set up a sort of child's love in their nursery days; but the Baron is so anxious that he should not have to mourn a change in their feelings, that he does all he can to set Perdican's merits off in his cousin's eyes. His success at this first meeting does not, however, satisfy his hopes, and he has to leave the young people to themselves. They soon appear, Perdican rather angry that Camille has not allowed him to kiss her. He tries to entice her to visit the places they used to go to together in their childhood; but she replies that memories of the past bore her, and they part in anger. Perdican next meets the chorus of peasants, talks to them about his young days spent among them, and seeing Rosette, Camille's foster-sister, bids her up to the chateau to supper. This is the beginning of the misunderstanding

which ends so fatally. The next interview between the two cousins ends in a distinct refusal by Camille of Perdican's offer of marriage, although evidently without any serious intention of being taken at her word, since she replies to the objections of Dame Pluche, her messenger, whom she sends with a letter to him—"Am I not to be his wife? Surely I may write to my betrothed." This note, however, and the meeting consequent upon it, has serious effects upon all concerned. Camille tells Perdican when they meet that she has come to ask his advice whether she would do well or ill in taking the veil, makes the condition that they are to talk as old friends, and gives him the kiss that he wanted. Then in the dialogue which follows she examines him as to his life in Paris, comparing with his answers her life in the convent.

"*Camille.* In the time, nearly ten years, that we have been separated from one another, you have commenced your experience of life. I know the sort of man you are, and with your heart and your wit you must have learnt much in a short time. Tell me, have you had any mistresses?

Perdican. Why do you ask?

Cam. Tell me, I pray you, without modesty and without conceit.

Perd. Yes, I have.

Cam. Well, did you love them?

Perd. With all my heart.

Cam. Where are they now? Do you know?

Perd. Here are, in truth, singular questions. What do you want me to tell you? I am not their husband or their brother: they have gone their own way.

Cam. There must of necessity have been one whom you preferred to the others. How long did you love the one you loved the best?

Perd. Curious girl that you are! do you want to act as my confessor?

Cam. I ask you as a favour to answer me sincerely. You are not a libertine, and I believe you have honesty in your heart. You must have inspired love, for you deserve it, and you would not have given yourself away for a caprice. Answer me, I pray you.

Perd. Faith, I cannot remember.

Cam. Do you know any man who has only loved one woman?

Perd. There are certainly such men.

Cam. Any friend of yours? Tell me his name.

Perd. I have no name to give you; but I believe there are men capable of only loving once.

Cam. How many times can an honest man love?

Perd. Do you want me to recite a litany? or are you yourself going through your catechism?

Cam. I should like to get instruction for myself, and know whether I should do well or ill to become a nun. Were I to become your wife, must you not answer frankly all my questions and bare your heart to me? I esteem you highly, and think you, both by nature and education, superior to many other men. I am sorry that you do not remember what I ask you; perhaps I should grow bolder as we got to know each other better.

Perd. What are you aiming at? Speak out; I will answer you.

Cam. Answer, then, my first question. Am I right in remaining at the convent?

Perd. No.

Cam. Should I do better to marry you?

Perd. Yes.

Cam. If the curate of your parish breathed upon a glass of water and told you that it was wine, would you drink it as such?

Perd. No.

Cam. If the curate of your parish breathed upon you, and

told me that you would love me all your life, should I be right in believing him?

Perd. Yes and no.

. . .

Cam. Do you know what cloisters are, Perdican? Have you ever passed a day in a woman's monastery?

Perd. Yes, I have been there.

Cam. One of my friends is a sister, only thirty years old, who at the age of fifteen had £20,000 a-year. She was the most beautiful, the most noble being that ever walked on this earth. She was a peeress of Parliament, and had married one of the most distinguished men in France. All the noble faculties of humanity had been cultivated in her, and like a shrub of a selected sap, all her buds had branched out. Never could love and happiness place their crown of flowers on a more beautiful brow. Her husband was unfaithful to her, she loved another man, and now she is dying of despair.

Perd. That is possible.

Cam. We live in the same cell, and we have spent many a night talking of her misfortunes; they have almost become mine,—'tis singular, is it not? I don't know how it happened. When she talked to me of her marriage, and described to me first the wildness of the first days, then the calm of the others, and how at last all flew away; how she sat at the corner of the fireplace, he at the window, without saying a single word to each other; how their love languished, and all attempts to come together ended only in complaints; how, little by little, a strange figure came between them and slipped into their sorrows,—I thought I saw myself in her words. When she used to say, 'There I have been happy,' my heart leapt up; when she added, 'There I have wept,' my tears used to flow. But just fancy one thing more singular still: in the end I had managed to create an imaginary life—that lasted four years; 'tis useless to tell you how many reflections, how much going back on myself, was needed for that. What I wanted to tell you as a curiosity is, that all Louise's stories, all the fictions of my dreams, bore your likeness.

Perd. My likeness?—mine?

Cam. Yes, and that is natural; you were the only man I had known. For, in truth, I loved you, Perdican.

Perd. How old are you, Camille?

Cam. Eighteen.

Perd. Go on, go on! I am listening.

Cam. There are two hundred women in our convent: a small number of them will never know life, and all the rest are expecting death. More than one of them has gone out, as myself to-day, virgin and full of hopes. Soon after they have come back, old and desolate. Every day some of them die in our sleeping-rooms, every day there come new lives to take the place of the dead on the hair-mattresses. Strangers who come to see us wonder at the calm and order of the house. They watch with attention the whiteness of our veils; but they ask themselves why we lower them over our eyes. What think you of these women, Perdican? Are they wrong, or in the right?

Perd. I don't know.

Cam. Some of them advise me to remain a maiden. I am very glad to ask your advice. Think you that those women would have done better to take a lover, or to advise me to do it?

Perd. I don't know.

Cam. You promised to answer me.

Perd. That promise is naturally void, for I cannot believe that it is you who are speaking.

Cam. That is possible; in my ideas there must be some very ridiculous things. It is quite possible that I may be repeating a lesson that others have taught me, and that I am a very imperfectly trained parrot. In our gallery there is a little picture, representing a monk bending over his missal; through the narrow bars of his cell glides a sunbeam, and one sees an Italian inn, and in front of it a goatherd dancing. Which of these men would you esteem most?

Perd. Neither, and both. They are two men of bone and flesh; one of them is reading, the other dancing,—

that is all I see in it. You are right to make yourself a nun.

Cam. Just now you said I was not.

Perd. Did I say not? That is possible.

Cam. So now you advise me to do it?

Perd. So you believe nothing?

Cam. Lift your head, Perdican; what man is there who believes nothing?

Perd. (*rising*). Here is one; I do not believe in immortal life. My darling sister, the nuns have given thee their experience, but, believe me, it is not thine own; thou wilt never die without loving me.

Cam. My wish is to love, but not to suffer. I want to love with an eternal love, and swear oaths never to be violated. Here is my love (*shows her crucifix*).

Perd. That lover does not exclude others.

Cam. For me, at least, he shall exclude them. Don't smile, Perdican! I have not seen you for ten years, and I am going to-morrow. In ten more years, if we meet again, we will talk of it again. I did not wish to remain a cold statue in your memory, for the want of all feeling leads to where I am. Listen to me. Go back to life, and, so far as you are happy, so far as you love as on this earth one can love, forget your sister Camille; but if it ever chance that you are forgotten, or forget yourself, if the angel of hope leave you alone with a void in the heart, then think of me, who will be praying for you.

Perd. You are proud; be careful of yourself.

Cam. Why?

Perd. Eighteen years old, and you don't believe in love!

Cam. Do you believe in it—you who speak to me? There you stand, bending over me, your knees worn out on the carpets of your mistresses, whose names you do not know. You have wept tears of joy and tears of despair; but you knew that the spring-water was more constant than your tears, and would always be there to wash your swollen eyelids. You work at your profession as a young man, and you smile when people talk to you of desolate women. You

don't believe that one can die of love, you who have loved and live. What, then, is this world? It seems to me that you must heartily despise those women who take you, such as you are, and who drive out their last lover to draw you into their arms with another's kiss on their lips. Just now I was asking you if you had loved; you answered me as would a traveller were he asked if he had been in Italy or Germany, and who might say, 'Yes, I have been there,' thinking afterwards to go to Switzerland, or any other country. Is your love like money, to pass from hand to hand always till death? No! 'tis not even like money, for the smallest coin of gold has the advantage over you, that through whatever hands it passes it retains its stamp.

. . . . . .

Perd. Poor child, I let you speak, and I desire very much to give you a word in answer. You talk to me of a nun who seems to have had a mournful influence upon you: you say that she has been deceived, that she has herself deceived, and that she is in despair. Are you sure that if her husband or her lover were to come and stretch his hand through the rails of the parlour, she would not give him hers?

Cam. What is that you said? I hardly understood.

Perd. Are you sure that, if her husband or her lover came back to tell her to resume her suffering, she would say No?

Cam. I believe she would.

Perd. There are two hundred women in your convent, and most of them have deep wounds in the depths of their hearts: they have made you touch these wounds, and with the drops of their blood have stained your maiden thought. They have lived, have they not? and they have shown you, with horror, the path of their life; before their scars you have crossed yourself, as before the wounds of Christ; they have given you a place in their lugubrious processions, and against these fleshless bodies you press yourself when you see a man pass. Are you sure that if the man who passes were the one who has deceived them, for whom they weep and suffer, whom they curse in their prayers to God—are you sure that, seeing him, they would not break their chains to

run to their old misfortunes, to press their bleeding breasts upon the blade that wounded them? My child, can you know the dreams of those women, who, you say, never dream? Do you know whose name they murmur when their sobs make the Host that is presented to them tremble? Those women who sit by you with shaking head to pour into your ear the history of their ruined old age, who sound the knell of their despair among the ruins of your youth, and make your fresh blood feel the cold of their tombs, know you what they are?

Cam. You frighten me,—you are getting angry.

Perd. Know you what nuns are, wretched girl? Those who represent men's love to you as a lie, do they know that there is something worse, the same misconception of the Divine Love? Do they know that it is a crime to whisper in a maiden's ear words only fit for women? How well they have taught you! How surely I foresaw all that when you stopped before our old aunt's portrait. You wanted to go away without shaking hands with me; you wanted never to see again this wood, nor this little fountain now weeping to look at us; you denied the days of your youth, and the plaster-mask that the nuns have placed upon your cheeks refused me a brother's kiss; but your heart has beat,—it, not being able to read, has forgotten its lesson, and you have come back to sit here on the grass. Well, Camille, those women spoke well to you—they have put you in the right way; it may cost me the happiness of my life; but tell them this from me, They have no share in heaven.

Cam. Nor I, would you not say?

Perd. Good-bye, Camille; go back to thy convent, and when they tell thee these hideous stories which have poisoned thee, answer them what I say to thee: all men are liars, inconstant, false, gossiping, hypocrites, proud or cowardly, despicable or sensual; all women are perfidious, artificial, vain, curious, depraved; the world is but a bottomless sewer, where the most shapeless monsters ramp and wriggle upon hills of filth. But there is in the world one thing holy and sublime, the union of two of these so imperfect, so dreadful

creatures. In love often one is deceived, often wounded, often unhappy: but one loves, and on the edge of the tomb one looks back to review the past, and one says to one's self—I have often suffered, made many a mistake, but I have loved. I, 'tis I that have lived,—not an artificial being created by my pride or my indolence."

After this bitter talk, Camille having gone away, Perdican examines his own feelings, and though he professes to be unable to come to any conclusion, it is pretty clear that, in spite of her cross-examination, he is thinking a great deal of his cousin. All might have been well, when he unluckily meets Maître Blasius quarrelling with Dame Pluche about a letter which she is carrying. Perdican interferes, and seeing that the letter is written by Camille, takes it from its bearer, finds it to be addressed to a nun, Camille's friend at the convent, opens and reads it. This letter, probably meant to fall into Perdican's hands, announces Camille's speedy return to the convent, but expresses great regret for the state of despair in which it will leave her cousin. "All has happened," she says, "as I foresaw. It is a terrible thing, but this poor young man has a dagger in his heart; he will never console himself for having lost me. And yet I did everything I could to make him disgusted with me. God will forgive me for having driven him to despair by my refusal. Alas! dear, how could I help it?" Terribly piqued by the tone in which Camille writes about him, Perdican determines to revenge himself by showing her that, far from pining away for her, he can make his addresses agreeable to another, and sends to ask her to meet him again, intending her to find him with Rosette. In this he succeeds;

and Camille, coming upon the pair by a spring in the little wood before alluded to, is a concealed witness of a tender scene between her cousin and the pretty peasant-girl. Meeting the messenger with Perdican's note, Camille approaches the spring.

"*Camille.* Perdican asks me to say farewell to him, before I go, at the little fountain where I brought him yesterday. What can he have to say to me? Here is the fountain, and here I am. Should I give him this last interview? Ah! (*she conceals herself behind a tree*) here is Perdican with Rosette, my foster-sister. I suppose he is going to leave her. I am very glad not to seem to be here first.

(*Enter* PERDICAN *and* ROSETTE, *who sit down.*)

Cam. (*aside*). What can this mean? He makes her sit down by his side. Was it to see him talk to somebody else that he asked me to meet him here? I should like to hear what he is saying to her.

Perd. (*aloud, so that* CAMILLE *can hear him*). I love you, Rosette; you are the only one who has not forgotten our happy days of old, the only one who remembers our past life. Take thy share in my new life; give me your heart, my child: here is the pledge of our love. (*He hangs his chain round her neck.*)

Rosette. You give me your gold chain?

Perd. Now, look at this ring. Get up, let us go to the fountain. Do you see us both in the spring leaning against each other? do you see your beautiful eyes near mine, your hand in mine? See how all that disappears. (*He throws the ring into the water.*) Look, now, how our images have vanished; now they gradually come back again; the disturbed water recovers its balance, yet it still trembles, great dark circles rush to its surface. Patience, here we come again! Already I can see your arms entwined with mine; yet one moment and not a wrinkle will remain on your pretty face. Look! that was a ring that Camille gave me.

(*Camille aside*). He has thrown my ring into the water.

Perd. Do you know what love is, Rosette? Listen! the wind is hushed; on the dried-up leaves which the sun has called back to life roll the pearl-drops of the morning shower. By the light of heaven, by the sun that we see, I love you! You like me, do you not? They have not blighted your youth, nor instilled into your blue veins the dregs of a faded blood? You don't want to be a nun; here you are in your youth and beauty, and in the arms of a man. Oh! Rosette, Rosette, know you now what love is?

Ros. Alas! Doctor Perdican, I will love you as I can.

Perd. Yes, as you can—a doctor as I am, and peasant-girl as you are, you will love me better than those pale statues that the nuns make, who have their head where their heart should be, and come out of the cloisters to shed over life the damp atmosphere of their cells. You have no knowledge; you could not read in a book the prayer that your mother teaches you, just as she learnt it from her mother; you do not even understand the meaning of the words which you repeat when you kneel at your bedside. But you understand that you are praying, and that is all that God requires.

Ros. What things you say to me, my lord!

Perd. You don't know how to read, but you know all that these woods and meadows say, the language of these warm streams, the beautiful fields all covered with crops—all this nature in the splendour of youth. All these you recognise as akin to you, and me among them. Come, rise, you shall be my wife, and we will take root together in the sap of the all-powerful world. (*He goes out with* ROSETTE.)"

The first result of this scene is that Camille changes her mind about going away; the second, that she sends for Perdican. She waits for him in a room hung with tapestry, behind which she conceals Rosette, wishing to undeceive her as to Perdican's real intentions towards her. The peasant-girl is reluctant to believe that all the promises so fresh in her memory are false, and this is

the only way the other can see to prove it to her. Perdican arrives, and comments upon the fact that she does not seem to be going away.

"*Camille.* I like discussion; I am not quite sure that I don't want to have another quarrel with you.

Perdican. What is the use of quarrelling when we cannot make it up? The pleasure of disputes is making peace again.

Cam. Are you certain that I am not ready to make it?

Perd. Don't mock me; I am not strong enough to answer you.

Cam. I want to be made love to; I don't know whether it is that I have on a new dress, but I want to amuse myself. You proposed that we should go to the village,—I agree, let us go there, go out in a boat; I feel inclined for a dinner on the grass, a walk in the forest. Will there be a moon to-night? (*Taking his hand.*) That is curious, you are not wearing the ring I gave you.

Perd. I have lost it.

Cam. That's how it is that I have found it: here, Perdican, here it is.

Perd. Is it possible? Where did you find it?

Cam. You are looking whether my hands are wet, are you not? It is true, I spoiled my convent dress to get this child's trinket out of the fountain. That is why I have put on another, and that has changed my mood; put that on your finger.

Perd. You got that ring out of the water, Camille, at the risk of falling in yourself? Is this a dream? here is the ring: is it you that put it back on my finger? Ah, Camille! why do you give me back this sad pledge of a happiness which is no more? Tell me, rash coquette, why do you go away? why do you stay? why do you change in appearance and colour from hour to hour, as the stone in this ring changes in each ray of the sun?

Cam. Do you know the heart of woman, Perdican? Are

you sure of their inconsistency? and do you know whether in changing sometimes their language they really change their thoughts? There are people who say that they do not. And certainly, it is often necessary for us to play a part, often to lie: you see I am frank; but do you think that when a woman's tongue lies, everything in her lies too? Have you ever thought about this weak, violent being? the vigour with which people judge it? the rules that they lay down for it? And who can tell whether, being forced by the world to be deceitful, this brainless little creature may not take it into her head to find some pleasure in it, and lie sometimes as a pastime, recklessly, just as she lies of necessity.

Perd. I understand nothing in all that, and I never lie. I love you, Camille—I say no more.

Cam. You say that you love me, and that you never lie?

Perd. Never!

Cam. Here is a lady, however, who says that it happens to you sometimes (*she lifts the tapestry, and discovers* ROSETTE *in a chair at the back, fainting*). What answer will you give to this child, Perdican, when she shall call you to account for your words? If you never lie, how is it that she has fainted on hearing you say that you loved me? I leave you with her,—try to bring her back to her senses (*going out*).

Perd. One moment, Camille; listen to me.

Cam. What have you got to say to me? it is to Rosette that you must speak. I do not love you; I have not gone, in a fit of spite, to look for this unhappy child in her cottage, to make her a bait, a toy; I have not imprudently repeated in her ears burning words addressed to another; I have not feigned for her sake to cast to the winds the memory of a cherished friendship; I have not put my chain round her neck; I have not told her I would marry her.

Perd. Listen to me, listen to me!

Cam. Did you not smile just now when I told you I had not been able to go to the fountain? Yes, I was there, and I heard all, but, God be my witness, I would not have spoken as you did. What are you to do with this girl now,

when she comes to you in tears with your burning kisses on her lips, to show you the wound that you have inflicted? You wanted to revenge yourself on me, did you not? to punish me for a letter written to my convent? You wished, at any price, to send at me a dart which should touch me; and you cared nothing that the envenomed arrow should pass through this child, so long as it struck me behind her. I had boasted of having awakened some love in you, of paining you by my departure. That wounded your noble pride. Well, let me tell you this,—you love me, do you hear, and you will marry this girl or you will be a villain.

Perd. Yes, I will marry her.

Cam. You will do well to do so.

Perd. Very well, much better than in marrying you. What is it that makes you so hot, Camille? This child has fainted, we will revive her again,—it only requires a flask of vinegar: you have wished to prove to me that at one moment in my life I had lied; that is possible, but you are rather bold in deciding when that moment was. Come, help me to look after Rosette."

Camille now begins to fear that she has gone a little too far, and endeavours to destroy her own work: Perdican is openly preparing for his marriage with Rosette, and Camille can find no one to interfere. She asks the Baron to forbid it, but he is entirely wrapped up in his own distress, and can only answer about himself. Camille presses him harder.

"*Camille.* Send for him,—tell him distinctly that this marriage is displeasing to you. Believe me, it is only a fancy; he will not resist you.

Baron. I shall wear mourning this winter, be assured of that.

Cam. But speak to him, for heaven's sake! It is a mad freak that is carrying him away: perhaps even now it is too late; if he has spoken about it, he will do it.

Bar. I am going to shut myself up, to abandon myself to my grief. Tell him, if he asks for me, that I am shut up, and abandoning myself to my grief at seeing him marry a girl of no family."

With this feeling remark he leaves her in despair, and on Perdican making his appearance, she assails him with various reasons against the marriage, which he answers with great coolness, appearing to be quite resigned to the idea, which, he reminds her, was first suggested to him by herself, and assuring her that he expects to be perfectly happy with his peasant wife. As the argument towards its close begins to lose its seriousness, and to degenerate into mere word-fencing, Camille plucks up courage.

"*Camille.* How long is this jest going to last?

Perdican. What jest?

Cam. Your marriage with Rosette.

Perd. Oh! but a short time. God has not made man a lasting piece of work: thirty or forty years at most.

Cam. I wonder if I shall dance at your wedding.

Perd. Look here, Camille, this is no laughing matter.

Cam. I like it too well to leave off.

Perd. Well, I will leave you to yourself, for I am beginning to have enough of it.

Cam. Are you going to your betrothed?

Perd. Yes, I am going to her this moment.

Cam. Give me your arm, I am going with you. (ROSETTE *comes in.*)

Perd. Oh! here you are, my child; come, I want to present you to my father.

Rosette. My lord, I have come to ask a boon of you. All the folks of the village that I have spoken to this morning have told me that you love your cousin, and that you have only courted me to amuse her and yourself; people laugh at

me as I pass, and I shall never be able to find a husband now in this neighbourhood, after having been the laughing-stock of the place. Permit me, then, to give you back the chain which you gave me, and to live in peace with my mother.

Cam. You are a good girl, Rosette; keep the chain,—it is I who give it you, and my cousin will take mine in its place. As for a husband, don't trouble yourself,—I will take it upon myself to find you one.

Perd. It is not difficult, really. Come, Rosette, let me take you to my father.

Cam. Why? it is useless.

Perd. Yes, you are right, my father would receive us badly: we must wait till the first moment of the surprise that he has felt has passed. Come with me (*to* ROSETTE), we will go back into the village. A pretty thing indeed for them to say that I don't love you when I marry you. By George, we'll make them hold their tongues.

(PERDICAN *and* ROSETTE *go out.*)

Cam. (*alone*). What is passing in me? He is taking her away with a very calm air. Strange, my head seems to be turning. Can he be really going to marry her? Ho! Dame Pluche! Dame Pluche! Is there no one here? (*Enter a footman.*) Run after Lord Perdican; tell him quickly to come back here—I want to speak to him. (*Exit footman.*) But what can be the matter with me? I faint,—my feet will not support me. (*Enter* PERDICAN.)

Perd. You sent for me, Camille?

Cam. No, no!

Perd. And, in good truth, you are pale; what have you to say to me? you had me recalled to speak to me?

Cam. No, no! Oh, my God, my God!"

The next and closing scene is in an oratory, where at last the blow falls which shatters all the hopes of happiness of the two lovers. Camille, in her almost maddening sorrow, has cast herself down at the foot of the altar.

"*Camille.* Hast Thou forsaken me, O God? Thou knowest that when I came here, I had sworn to be faithful to Thee: when I refused to become the spouse of another than Thee, I thought that I was speaking sincerely before Thee and my conscience. Thou knowest it, Father; wilt Thou have no more of me? Oh, why dost Thou make truth itself a lie? Why am I so weak? Oh, miserable wretch that I am, I have forgotten how to pray! (PERDICAN *comes in.*)

Perdican. Pride, most fatal of the counsellors of man, what made you come between this maid and me? Here she is pale and affrighted, pressing her heart and her face on the unfeeling stones. She might have loved me, and we were born for each other; what made you come on our lips, oh pride, when our hands were about to join?

Cam. Who has followed me? Who is speaking beneath this dome? Is it you, Perdican?

Perd. Senseless that we are! we love one another. What dream has this been of ours, Camille? What vain words, what wretched madness, have passed between us like a deadly wind? Which of us has wished to deceive the other? Alas, life in itself is so painful a dream, why should we join our own to it? O God! happiness is so rare a pearl in this ocean down here! Thou hadst given it us, divine fisherman, thou hadst drawn for us from the lowest depths this inestimable jewel; and we, like the spoiled children that we were, have made a plaything of it. The green pathway that led us to each other had so sweet a slope, surrounded with flowering bushes, fading away into so calm a horizon! And vanity, gossiping, anger were destined to come and throw their shapeless barriers on this heavenly road which would have led us in one embrace to Thee. We were destined to do wrong, for we are human. What madness has been ours! we love one another! (*He takes her in his arms.*)

Cam. Yes, we love one another, Perdican; let me feel it on your heart. God, who sees, will not be offended; my love for you does not displease Him. He has known it for fifteen years.

Perd. Dearest, you are mine! (*He embraces her; a loud cry is heard behind the altar.*)

Cam. That is the voice of my foster-sister.

Perd. How has she come here? I left her on the staircase when you called me back. She must have followed me without my noticing it.

Cam. Let us go into this gallery—it was from there that the cry came.

Perd. I don't know what I feel; it seems as if my hands were covered with blood.

Cam. No doubt the poor child has been watching us—she has fainted again; come, let us go and help her. Alas! all this is cruel.

Perd. No, truly, I will not go in; I feel a mortal cold which paralyses me. Go you, Camille, and try to recover her. (CAMILLE *goes out.*) Oh, my God, I beseech Thee, make me not a murderer! Thou seest what is happening; we are two thoughtless children, and we have been playing with life and death, but our hearts are pure. Oh, God of justice, do not slay Rosette! I will find her a husband, I will repair my fault,—she is young, she will be happy. O God! do not this thing. Thou canst still bless four of Thy children. (*To* CAMILLE, *who re-enters.*) Well, Camille?

Cam. She is dead! Farewell, Perdican."

CHAPTER IV.

THE COMEDIES.

'FANTASIO,' the first of the lighter plays, was written in a most productive year, the year 1833, in which not only the two great tragedies of 'André del Sarto' and the 'Caprices de Marianne,' but 'Namouna' and 'Rolla,' had been composed. This strange little drama, which can scarcely be called a drama, or even a character-sketch or study of life, but is indeed and in fact a simple *fantasia*, a caprice, a wild and odd fragment of music played upon that lute with which the poet was so familiar, the fantastical mind of a wandering and unrestrained youth, obeying every impulse, yet full of thought and fine perceptions through all—is perhaps the most interesting of de Musset's lighter efforts. It is a test indeed of the poet's real lover, that he should appreciate and delight in this bit of pure fancy, without aim or purpose, without plot or definite conclusion. Nobody can doubt that Paul de Musset is right in saying that Alfred was himself the original of nearly all the young men who are the principal characters in his plays. Of this part in particular he says, "Every one who had the good fortune of knowing the author in his fits of youthfulness and

mad gaiety, knows with how true a pencil he has represented himself in the form so thoroughly original of Fantasio. But that which, in this play, is enough to compose a whole character, the subject itself of the piece, is but one point of the wit, one of the thousand folds of the heart, when we look more nearly at the man." When, as Paul de Musset says, *on regarde l'homme de près*, this fantastical character does seem to represent fairly one side of his nature, ever reappearing from the time when he and his brother, in their school-days, identified themselves with the characters in the romantic books of chivalry that they loved, to that in which, later on, he received in a similar sort of game, the name of the *Prince Phosphore de Cœur Volant*.

But Fantasio is something more than Alfred or any other individual youth. He is the philosophic boy, the poetic child in person, the Will-o'-the-wisp of genius, laughing yet weeping over the shows of things about him, understood only by the girl-princess who is of the same species, as fantastical, yet forced into practical action and endurance as the Fantasios of life never are. It is hers to yield to her fate, to put on her gilded chains, to marry the shadow prince, in order to save her father from war and disaster, while his part is only to *fantasticare*, to put all the aspects of the case before her, to mock the prince, the war, the dismal necessity, all the things that people call real, around these two poetic figures. In the background the shadowy story goes on: the wooer comes in disguise, there is intrigue and stratagem and vain contention enough to prove at every point Fantasio's accusation of unreality. But before the inevitable moment comes in which the poetic

princess has to become a prosaic bride, and the shadows that have been strutting and swelling behind come into their real position as terrible yet contemptible facts which no philosophy can do away with, the story breaks off, the dream ends, the jester-philosopher melts into thin air. For Fantasio is not the lover of the lady: he is the commentator, the looker-on, the critic of a life in which he has no share, in which he has no mind to take any share but that of following whatever whim may seize him, though with an ever-fantastic understanding and sympathy for the other young creature who is of his species and kind.

The scene opens in a street in Munich, where some students are discovered together, drinking. They see Fantasio coming, and wonder what part he is going to take in the *fête* which is being held in honour of the arrival of the Princess Elsbeth's betrothed, the Prince of Mantua. Fantasio, who is in hiding from his creditors, sits down with them, and begins to talk, refusing to join in various schemes they have in hand.

"*Fantasio.* Well! where do you want me to go? Look at this old smoky town; there is not a square, not a street, not an alley, where I have not loitered thirty times; not a pavement over which I have not dragged these worn-out heels, not a house in which I do not know all about the girl or the old woman whose head is perpetually showing itself at the window. I could not make a step without treading in my footsteps of yesterday. But, my dear friend, this town is nothing to my brain. All its corners are a hundred times better known to me; all the streets, all the alleys of my imagination, are over and over again exhausted. In this worn-out brain, I, its sole inhabitant, have walked a hundred times; I have drunk in all the taverns, I have rolled

like an absolute monarch in a gilded coach, have trotted like a good citizen on a peaceful mule; and now I dare not go into it even as a robber with a dark lantern in my hand.

Spark. I cannot understand all this work about thyself: when I smoke, for instance, my thoughts turn to tobacco; when I drink, they become Spanish wine or Flemish beer; when I kiss my mistress's hand, they go in by the ends of her taper fingers to spread like electric currents over all her being; the scent of a flower is enough to distract me, and of all that nature holds, the most wretched object is enough to change me to a bee, and send me fluttering here and there with a pleasure always new.

Fant. Come to the point; you are capable of going a-fishing.

Spark. If it amuses me I am capable of anything.

[The conversation is here interrupted by the passing of a funeral.]

Fant. Holloa, my men! whom are you burying there?

Carriers. We are burying Saint-Jean.

Fant. Saint-Jean dead? the king's jester dead? Who fills the place? the minister of justice?

Car. His place is vacant; you can take it if you like. (*Exeunt.*)

Spark. You brought that insult on your own head. What are you thinking of, to stop people thus?

Fant. There was no insult. 'Twas a friendly piece of advice this man gave me. I am going to follow it at once.

Spark. You are going to make yourself the Court jester!

Fant. This very night, if they will have me. As I cannot sleep at home, I shall be present at the royal farce that is to be played to-morrow, and in the king's box too.

Spark. How clever you are! You will be recognised, and the footmen will turn you out of doors. Are you not a godson of the late queen?

Fant. What a fool *you* are! I shall put on a hump and a red wig, like Saint-Jean; no one will recognise me, if there were three dozen relations round about me."

Firm in this sudden impulse, Fantasio proceeds to the shop of the Court tailor to obtain a facsimile of the dress of the deceased buffoon. In a scene which follows, the Prince of Mantua, who is afflicted with a somewhat extravagant idea of his own importance, concocts with his aide-de-camp Marinoni a plan by which he may watch and form an opinion of the princess. Marinoni is to represent his master, wearing his uniform and acting in every way as if he were the real suitor for the princess's hand; the prince in the meantime, in the character of the aide-de-camp, is to observe everything that passes, and so make up his mind whether to proceed with the marriage or not,—perhaps a not very novel expedient. We are then introduced to the heroine, Elsbeth herself, who, full of grief for the jester, comes into the garden with her governess with the words, "I loved Saint-Jean." The attendant tries to divert her attention by talking of her approaching betrothal, to which the young princess does not seem to look forward with any pleasure. The prince has been represented to her as an idiot; but she consoles herself, or rather pretends to console herself, by the thought that he will be something to laugh at—an idea which brings from the governess the exclamation, "Ah! if Saint-Jean were here! Did you really love him so much, my child?"

"*Elsbeth.* It is a strange thing: his wit bound me to him by some invisible thread that seemed to come from my heart; his perpetual mocking of my romantic ideas used to please me above all things, while I can hardly support many of the people who always agree with me. I don't know what it was about him, his eyes, his gestures, the way he took snuff. He was a whimsical fellow; while he was speaking to me, I used to see delicious pictures pass before

my eyes: his words gave life, as if by magic, to the strangest things.

Governess. He was another Triboulet.

Els. I don't know anything about that: he was a gem of wit."

Here the governess retires and Elsbeth is left, as she thinks, alone. She soon, however, discovers a man behind some shrubs, who turns out to be Fantasio got up to resemble Saint-Jean.

"It seems to me that there is some one behind those shrubs. Is it the ghost of my poor jester that I see seated among the corn-flowers in the meadow? Answer me; who are you? what are you doing there, gathering those flowers? (*She advances towards the bank.*)

Fantasio (seated, dressed as a jester, with a hump and wig). I am an honest flower-picker, who wishes good morning to your lovely eyes.

Els. What means this equipment? Who are you who parody under that large wig a man whom I loved? Are you a student of buffoonery?

Fant. May it please your most serene highness, I am the king's new jester; the major-domo has received me favourably, I have been presented to the *valet de chambre*, the kitchen-servants protect me, and here I sit modestly picking flowers and waiting for wit to come.

Els. I should think it doubtful that you would ever pick that flower.

Fant. Why? Wit may come to an old man as easily as to a young girl. It is sometimes so difficult to distinguish between a witty point and a coarse jest. Plenty of words, that is the important matter: the worst shot with a pistol may hit the bull's-eye if he fires seven hundred and eighty shots a minute, just as well as the skilful man who only shoots one or two well-aimed ones. All I ask for is to be nourished conformably to the magnitude of my paunch, and I shall watch my shadow in the sun to see if my wig grows.

Els. So that here you are clothed in the spoils of Saint-Jean? You are right to talk of your shadow; as long as you wear this dress, it will, I believe, be liker him than you are.

Fant. I am at this moment composing an elegy which will decide my fate.

Els. How?

Fant. It will clearly prove that I am the greatest man in the world, or it will be worth nothing at all. I am turning the universe upside down to put it into an acrostic; the moon, the sun, and the stars are fighting to get into my rhymes as the students do at the door of a theatre.

Els. Poor man, what a trade you are undertaking! making wit at so much an hour. Have you no arms or legs, and would it not be better to beat the earth than your own brain?

Fant. Poor little one, what a trade you are undertaking! marrying a fool whom you have never seen! Have you neither a heart nor a head, and would it not be better to sell your dresses than yourself?

Els. You are bold, Sir new-comer.

Fant. What is the name of this flower, if you please?

Els. A tulip; what do you prove from that?

Fant. A red tulip, or a blue?

Els. Blue, it seems to me.

Fant. Not at all, it is a red tulip.

Els. Are you going to dress up an old saying in new clothes? You don't need to say that of tastes and colours there can be no disputing.

Fant. I don't dispute anything; I tell you that this tulip is a red tulip, and nevertheless I agree that it is blue.

Els. How do you manage that?

Fant. Like your marriage-contract. Who, under the sun, can know whether he is born red or blue? The tulips themselves don't know it. The gardeners and the lawyers make such extraordinary grafts, that apples become pumpkins, and the thistles leave the ass's jaws, to be flooded with sauce in a bishop's silver dish. This tulip that you see

expected to be red, but they married her, and now she is quite astonished to find herself blue; it is in this way that the whole world changes in man's hands, and poor Lady Nature must laugh sometimes in spite of common-sense, when she gives back in her lakes and her seas the image of the everlasting masquerade. Think you that there was the scent of the rose in Moses' paradise? 'twas the smell of fresh hay. The rose is a daughter of civilisation, 'tis noble like you or me.

Els. The pale blossom of the wild rose may become a rose, and the thistle may become an artichoke; but one flower cannot become another; so what matters it to Nature? No one can change her, they make her more beautiful or they kill her. The poorest violet would sooner die than yield, if men wanted by artificial means to change her form by one stamen.

Fant. That is why I think more highly of a violet than of a king's daughter.

Els. There are things that even jesters have no right to mock; remember that. If you have been listening to my conversation with my governess, take care for your ears.

Fant. Not for my ears, but for my tongue. Playing with words is as good a way as any other of playing with thoughts, actions, or beings. Everything on earth is a joke, and it is as difficult to understand the look of a child of four years old, as the nonsense of three modern dramas.

Els. You seem to me to observe the world through a somewhat transforming prism.

Fant. Every one has his spectacles, but no one sees exactly what colour the glasses are. Who could tell me rightly whether I am happy or miserable, good or bad, sad or gay, fool or clever?

Els. You are ugly, anyhow. That is certain.

Fant. As certain as your beauty. Here comes your father with your future husband. Who knows whether you will marry him. (*Exit Fantasio.*)"

The king comes in in company with Marinoni disguised

as the Prince of Mantua, and the prince himself as aide-de-camp. The sham prince is introduced to Elsbeth, who puts off the real presentation till the evening. The king objects to the perpetual presence of the aide-de-camp, who always follows them and seems to listen to their conversation, and induces Marinoni to send him away, the prince himself considering this action a clever move on the part of his subordinate and substitute. As he retires into the gardens, the supposed aide-de-camp meets the Princess Elsbeth, who has also withdrawn, and begins to pay his addresses, but is very badly received. We now find Fantasio in an ante-chamber of the palace, congratulating himself on the success of his plan, though acknowledging that it was a tipsy freak. Suddenly through a window he sees the princess in a neighbouring room.

"Is not that the princess," he says, "that I see in the next chamber through this glass? She is fitting on her bridal veil; two great tears are stealing down her cheeks; one of them like a pearl has detached itself and fallen on her breast. Poor little one, I heard this morning her conversation with her governess: it was really by chance, as I was sitting on the grass with no desire but to go to sleep. And now here she is again, weeping, without a suspicion that I see her. How capricious is chance! I must needs get tipsy, meet Saint-Jean's funeral, take his dress and his office, in fact commit the maddest act in the world, in order through this window to see fall perhaps the only two tears that this child will shed on her betrothal veil."

A scene of recriminations between the prince and Marinoni, ending in the continuance of the plan, leads again to the garden, where the princess, after giving to her father her assent to the marriage, in order to avert

a war with Mantua, is left alone, and is found there by Fantasio, whom she at once accosts.

"*Elsbeth.* You are still here, poor boy! are you happy here?

Fantasio. Like a bird in freedom.

Els. 'Twould have been a better answer had you said, like a bird in a cage; this palace is a pretty enough cage, but still it is one.

Fant. The size of a palace or a chamber makes a man's freedom neither more nor less. The body moves as it can; the imagination sometimes spreads its wings as broad as the sky, in a cell no bigger than my hand."

The conversation goes on, Fantasio keeping up his character as a jester, until the scene is ended by the sudden entrance of the governess with the news that the prince is not the prince, but only one of his attendants disguised in his dress. The next proceedings of the sham jester are full of the mockery and extravagance which run through the piece, and we hear that he has been arrested and imprisoned for a new prank, that of removing, with a fish-hook and line, the wig of the supposed prince, a piece of practical mockery which cannot go without punishment. In the last scene we find him asleep in the prison where he has been confined. The princess enters with her governess, carrying a lantern, and on seeing Fantasio without his wig and hump, the latter personage at once declares him to be the disguised Prince of Mantua. This mistake forces him to reveal his own real name, and to give as his reason for assuming the character of the king's jester, the fact that he is greatly in debt, and could see no other way of escaping from his creditors. Elsbeth offers to pay his debts, but

he declines this, preferring to receive her gift himself, with the characteristic remark that a nobleman without debts could not show himself anywhere. The princess gives him the money, pressing on him also the key of the royal gardens, so that whenever he is tired of being hunted by his creditors he may return to the corn-flowers among which she saw him first. The prison doors are now open, and Fantasio departs, leaving the governess to deplore the sad fact that the Prince of Mantua has gone and she has never seen him.

'Barberine,' though it has also a fantastic element, has more of the character of an ordinary comedy than its predecessor. The story is one that has been employed by many writers, though without the curious element of innocent farce which here enters into the defence of virtue and confusion of the would-be seducer. The young hero is a braggart but harmless boy, newly set out from his father's castle in search of adventures in war and love, and making his way with his retinue, with a prodigious sense of his own importance, to Court. But his father and his aunt Berthe are still continually on his lips, notwithstanding his swagger, and the boy's vanity and ingenuous ignorance of the world are amusing and cheerful, until he falls into the hands of a certain chevalier, a wandering rascal of gentility, who discourses to him of intrigue and pleasure, indoctrinating him with the theory that all women are frail, and their favours easy to win. While at the inn where he meets and dines with this deceiver of youth, de Rosemberg sees Barberine, who is there to take leave of her husband, Count Ulric, also on his way to the Hungarian Court with the intention of

joining the army—and is dazzled with her beauty. He meets her husband on his arrival at Court, which is a true court of romance, with a stately queen holding her courtiers in order, mediating in their quarrels, and checking their impetuosity. Young de Rosemberg, full of the insidious counsels of the chevalier, makes various insolent remarks about the confidence of husbands and the weakness of wives that nearly bring on a duel with Ulric; the queen enters in time to stop the quarrel, and in answer to Rosemberg's explanations that he only spoke from his own experience of women and not to insult Ulric, she checks the youth with the remark that she had thought experience had a maturer beard. Excited by this, Rosemberg ventures to bet his whole fortune against Ulric's that he will go to the Bohemian count's castle, and show him how much he is mistaken about his wife's virtue. Ulric takes the wager, and calls on the queen to witness it. The young baron, therefore, starts again for Barberine's abode, and the next scene shows him arrived at the castle in conversation with a certain weird little Moorish maiden, a captive or slave, called Kalékairi, who meets him at the door. He offers her money to gain her assistance with her mistress, which at once fills Kalékairi with suspicion.

Rosemberg, left alone, begins, after a passing remark upon the maid, to muse over his best way of carrying out his plan. Taking Kalékairi as bought already, he goes on—

"*Rosemberg.* Come, anyhow I have begun well. The servant is in my interests; now, how about the mistress. . . . Let me see! what method shall I use? Force? no! that would be worthy neither of a nobleman nor a fair wager.

Love! one might try that, but it would take a long time, and I wish my triumph to be like Cæsar's. Ah! there's some one in the turret—the countess herself. I recognise her. She's dressing her hair, and I think I hear her singing."

BARBERINE (*singing outside*).

"Brave knight, fair knight, departing for the war,
Why now so far
From us must go?
Can you not see how dark and cold the air,
And that all there
Is care and woe?"

"*Ros.* She sings nicely, but her song seems to express some regret, something like a sad memory. Perhaps I was too rash when I made that bet. There are times when one is hardly responsible for one's actions. However, I must make no mistake about it now: it is a case of rather too many crowns; shall I try artifice?"

BARBERINE (*singing outside*).

"Ah! you that think that a love you forsake
Your flight can make
Die in the breast;
Alas! while you leave all for glory's sake,
Its smoke will take
Flight like the rest?"

Rosemberg muses on, and has decided upon a combination of artifice and love when Barberine comes in, and having read the letter of introduction with which Ulric has furnished the visitor, greets him cordially, but on his departure to see after his servants and horses, consults Kalékairi as to the meaning of his visit. The maid tells her mistress that the new-comer has given her gold, and the two women between them divine his intentions, their guess at which is soon confirmed from

his own lips. On his return to the stage, the two withdraw into the background, and the young baron, not seeing them, begins to soliloquise. His plan is to be copied from that of Iachimo: he is to get into Barberine's room and note down all the details; but seeing some difficulty and danger in this, he determines, just as Barberine comes forward, to try her with some phrases of gallantry, and so give himself a chance of carrying out his plan by other means. Barberine talks to him with much kindness of the vintage which is then in progress, and of his aunt, whom he brings into the conversation as a good housewife. The countess announces herself as also a good housewife, and produces as her arms a distaff and spindle: impatient of this rebuff, Rosemberg ridicules these and declares spinning to be the "work of our grandmothers," upon which Barberine leads him back artfully to his former simple talk.

"*Barberine.* Does not your aunt spin?

Rosemberg. Yes; but my aunt is an old woman; it is only old women who spin.

Barb. Really! are you sure of that? I don't think that is what should be. Do you not know the old maxim, that work is prayer? That was said long ago. Well, if these two things are like each other and can come together before God, is it not right that the hardest task should come to the youngest hands? Is it not when our hands are lively, quick, and full of activity, that they should turn the spindle? And when, one day, these hands are forced by time and fatigue to cease their toil, is it not then time to clasp them, leaving the rest to the Supreme Good? Trust me, Lord Rosemberg, never say an ill word of our distaffs or even of our needles; they are, I repeat it, our arms. You men, it is true, bear more glorious arms, but these have also their value; here are my lance and my sword (*showing the distaff and spindle*).

Ros. (*aside*). The sermon is not bad: but here I am a long way from my wager."

He goes on with the conversation, gradually turning it to the advantage of his plot. Barberine asks him whether he has lost his heart. He answers—

"*Rosemberg.* Yes, madam, a short time ago; but for ever.

Barberine. It is surely to some young girl that you wish to marry?

Ros. Alas! madam, that is impossible. It is true, she is young and beautiful, and she has all the qualities for making a husband happy; but this happiness is not for me, her hand is another's.

Barb. That is bad; you must get over it.

Ros. Ah! madam, I must die for it.

Barb. Bah, at your age!

Ros. How!—at my age? Are you, then, so much older than I am?

Barb. Much. I am reasonable.

Ros. So was I before I saw you. Ah! if you knew who she was!—if I dared to pronounce her name before you.

Barb. Do I know her?

Ros. Yes, madam; and since my secret has half escaped from me, I would confide it to you altogether, if you would promise not to punish me for it.

Barb. Punish you! Why should I? It has nothing to do with me, I suppose?

Ros. More than you think, madam; and if I dared——(*Enter* KALÉKAIRI.)"

Kalékairi's mission this time is to inform her mistress that Rosemberg has largely bribed the porter, L'Uscoque, to let him secretly into Barberine's chamber. This the maid has learnt from the porter. It inspires Barberine with a whimsical idea, and the two elaborate together a scheme for punishing the false suitor.

In the next scene Rosemberg resumes the conversation which the entrance of the maid had interrupted, and declares his love, which Barberine refuses to believe in. Going away immediately to look after her peasants, she leaves him in the hall awaiting her return. Suddenly he hears the doors bolted and the windows shut, and finds himself a prisoner. He consoles himself for this on hearing Barberine's step outside, and tells himself that the locking of the doors was only a precaution on her part. She, however, only appears at a wicket in the wall, and from thence speaks to him:—

"Lord Rosemberg, since you have only come here to commit a theft,—the most odious and most deserving of punishment of all thefts—that of a woman's honour,—and as it is just that the punishment should be in proportion to the crime, you are imprisoned as a thief. If you wish for food and drink, your only means of obtaining them is to act as do those old women whom you dislike so much—that is, to spin. You have there, as you know, a distaff and spindle, and you may rest assured that the bill of fare of your meals will be increased or diminished according to the quantity of thread that you have spun."

Rosemberg, left alone in the hall, tries at first to treat the whole thing as a joke, decidedly in bad taste, and begins to sing, leaving the spinning implements untouched. As the time goes on, however, and it begins to get late, he becomes anxious: he is very hungry, and sees no prospect of dinner. To increase his trouble, Kalékairi puts her head in through the wicket, and tells him that, as he has not begun to spin, she supposes that he does not want any supper, and bids him good night. Rosemberg gets enraged at this information, and

pictures to himself a long imprisonment and death from starvation. In the midst of his raging the wicket is again opened, and Barberine appears.

"*Barberine.* Sir, before going to bed, I have come to see whether you have been spinning.

Rosemberg. No, I have not. I am not spinning; I am not a spinning-woman. Ah! Barberine, you shall pay for this.

Barb. Sir, when you have spun, you must give notice to the soldier on guard at the door.

Ros. Don't go away, countess! In the name of heaven, hear me!

Barb. Spin! You must spin.

Ros. No, 'sdeath! I will break the distaff. No; I would rather die!

Barb. Good night, sir.

Ros. One word! Do not go away!

Barb. What is it?

Ros. Well . . . well, madame, in good truth I—I don't know how to spin. How can you expect me to spin?

Barb. You must learn. (*Shuts the wicket.*)"

Rosemberg is left deploring his fate, but more now in grief than in anger. He reviews the whole situation in his mind, and seeing no way out of it, he takes up the distaff. While he is moralising over it, he hears the curfew sound. Night is coming on; every one is going to bed; he will be left alone and supperless; anything is better than that. "Holloa!" he shouts; "is there a sentry there?" The wicket opens, and Barberine looks in.

"*Barberine.* Well, what is it?

Rosemberg. I am spinning, countess — I am spinning. Let me have some supper."

Kalékairi brings him in a not very tempting repast of cucumber and salad. She gives him back the money he has given her, and informs him, in answer to his question about a stir outside, that the queen has just arrived, and that Barberine is receiving her.

With the queen comes, among other members of her Court, the Count Ulric, Barberine's husband, and the confusion of poor young Rosemberg, found in so humiliating a position, is complete. The whimsical, almost farcical, scene is thus changed into one of moral seriousness. To explain her arrival to all, especially to the stupefied Rosemberg, the queen reads aloud the letter which Barberine had sent to her husband. It runs thus:—

"My very dear and much honoured husband, we have just received at the Castle a visit from the young Baron de Rosemberg, who said he was a friend of yours, and sent here by you. Though a woman generally keeps a secret of this sort to herself, I will tell you that he has made love to me. I hope that you will not take any vengeance for this, nor conceive any hatred against him. He is a young man, of good family, with nothing to complain of about him. All that he needed was to learn to spin, and that is what I am going to teach him. He is now in our big hall, on the first storey, where he has a distaff and spindle, and is spinning or going to spin. You will find it strange that I should have chosen this occupation for him; but as I saw that, with many good qualities, he lacked that of reflection, I thought it best for him to learn this trade, which, while it will allow him to reflect at his ease, will also give him a means of gaining a livelihood. You know that the hall is closed with sufficiently solid bolts; I told him to wait for me there, and then I shut him in. There is a very convenient trap-door in the wall, through which his food will be passed to him,

so that I am sure that he will come out from his prison with much advantage to himself."

The reading of the letter is naturally received with a burst of merriment, upon which her Hungarian majesty takes what we feel to be somewhat too high ground.

"If you laugh at this letter, my lords," continues the queen, "God keep your own wives from ill!" She then expresses her sympathy with the husband, Count Ulric, and her intention of staying in his castle with her Court, "in order that men may know that the roof under which dwells a virtuous woman is as holy as a church, and that kings leave their palaces for the houses that are God's."

The 'Chandelier' appears, like many other of de Musset's lighter works, the result of an experience of the author's own. When he was quite a boy he thought he saw that a lady older than himself was not disinclined to receive his attentions: but found out, after some time spent in futile devotion, that he was being made to play the part of a screen to conceal her intrigue with another. In this case, however, the lady stuck to her Clavaroche, and de Musset made his exit, and thought no more about it. Seven years afterwards he thought he saw that he was again being invited into the same trap: it was not so, but the suspicion made him write the 'Chandelier.' Anything more complete, more perfectly worked out than this little play, it is hard to imagine; the original idea of such an intrigue is a most unelevated one, but the pure single-hearted character of Fortunio, and the slow but sure way in which his unselfish devotion works upon the heart of Jacqueline, is

elaborated with wonderful skill. The song he sings in the first act, and on which much of the story turns, is one of de Musset's most successful efforts in this, a method frequently resorted to in the unfolding of the action in his plays.

"Think you that I will tell you now
Whom I dare woo?
I, for the world, would not, I vow,
Tell that to you.
We'll sing in joyous roundelay
If you will sing,
That she's my love, as fair and gay
As fields in spring.
Whate'er her fancy orders me,
That still do I.
Could death to her advantage be
I'd gladly die.
Love unrequited to the heart
Such pains can give,
That I, so have I felt the smart,
Scarcely would live.
Yet is my love so great, that I
Would hide it ever;
I for my sweet would gladly die,
But name her—never."

Jacqueline, who, on the advice of Clavaroche, her lover, has chosen Fortunio, one of her husband's clerks, to bear the suspicion, and perhaps the vengeance, of the injured Maître André, is touched by this song, and is talking to him in her room about a copy of it, for which she has asked him, when she hears Clavaroche coming up. She hides the youth in a cupboard, forgets all about him, and in his concealment he hears from their conversation which follows, that he is only a toy

in her hands, and that the soldier is her real lover. Miserable under this knowledge, he makes his escape unknown to his mistress, and, wretched as he is at being so treated, still continues steadfast in his love. Jacqueline then finds out that her jealous husband is going to watch that night in the garden for her lover; and Clavaroche insists that a message, giving him a rendezvous, shall be sent to Fortunio, who will thus be caught in the trap intended for himself. Fortunio gets the message and accepts the rendezvous; but meanwhile Jacqueline, repenting a little, sends for him, on the pretext that he has not brought her the copy of the song she had asked for. She tells him that she has changed her mind about the appointment for the evening, and he replies with much sadness, but, finally overwhelmed by his feelings, betrays his knowledge of the part he has been intended to play.

"*Fortunio.* Jacqueline, listen to me: you would have done better to have told me all: I should have consented to everything.

Jacqueline. What do you say?

For. You would have done much better to tell me; yes, before God! I would have done everything for you.

Jac. Done everything for me! What do you mean by that?

For. Ah, Jacqueline, Jacqueline! you must love him very much; it must be hard upon you to lie—to mock me so pitilessly.

Jac. I! mock you? who has said so?

For. I beseech you, do not lie any more; we've had enough of that. I know all.

Jac. What is it that you know?

For. I was in your room yesterday when Clavaroche was there.

Jac. Is it possible? you were in the recess?

For. Yes, I was there; in the name of heaven, speak of it no more."

A deep silence falls upon the scene after this statement, which entirely changes the relations between Jacqueline and Fortunio—Jacqueline prays him to say nothing about his discovery, and he answers by pouring out his love and anger; till, carried away by his excitement, he almost faints. She lavishes cares upon him, and as he comes to himself, he is about to take his departure when she stops him.

"*Jacqueline.* Fortunio, listen to me now.

Fortunio (*coming back*). What do you want with me, Jacqueline?

Jac. Listen to me. I must speak to you. I am not going to ask you to forgive me; I am not going to justify myself. You are good, brave, and sincere; I have been false and unfaithful. I cannot leave you thus.

For. I forgive you with all my heart.

Jac. No; you are suffering—the ill is done. Where are you going? What are you about to do? How is it that, knowing all, you have come back here?

For. You sent for me.

Jac. But you came to tell me that you would keep the appointment I had made. Would you have come?

For. Yes; if it was to do you good. And I confess to you that I thought it would.

Jac. Why to do me good?

For. Madelon said something——

Jac. You knew it, poor soul! and yet you would have come?

For. The first word I said to you was that I would gladly die for you; the second that I never lied.

Jac. You knew it, and you were coming! Think what you say; it was a trap.

For. I knew everything.

Jac. You were to be surprised, killed perhaps, dragged to prison, heaven knows! Oh! it is horrible to speak of.

For. I knew all.

Jac. You knew all? all! You were hidden there yesterday in that recess, behind the curtain. You were listening, were you not? You knew everything, did you not?

For. Yes.

Jac. You knew that I lied to you, deceived you, mocked you, and meant to kill you? You knew that I loved Clavaroche, and that he made me do everything he wished? that yesterday I had made you my dupe? that I am despicable and mean? that I exposed you to death at my pleasure? You knew all that? Well, what do you know now?

For. Jacqueline, I believe I know——

Jac. Do you know that I love you, child as you are? that you must pardon me, or I shall die? and that I ask it of you on my knees?"

The play ends with the perfect reassurance of Maître André, the cheated husband, and a feast as lively as the former one ensues, in which Fortunio proves his ascendancy in the house by commanding Clavaroche to sing in the same words as, coming from that gallant officer, produced his own song in the first part of the play.

'Il ne faut jurer de rien' is a story of higher moral purport, and one of the most interesting and charming of the 'Proverbes.' It is a kind of triumph of innocence over the vile ideas and assaults of that character happily disappeared from the English drama, but still exceedingly popular in France, the rake, whose conception of women is that they are universally corrupt, and that there is no one who may not be led astray by a

Lovelace so accomplished as himself. The rake in question is Valentin, a young exquisite, who has come to the end of a dissipated and riotous life in Paris, and whom his uncle, an old millionaire, desires to see married and settled. The comedy begins by a dialogue between the two, in which Van Buck, the uncle, proposes to the young man, after the most approved French model, a marriage with a young lady suitable in every way—young, fair, virtuous, and rich. Valentin, with much scoffing at the idea of virtue in any woman, makes the audacious proposal that, as a condition to his assent, he shall be allowed to introduce himself under a disguise into the young lady's house, and attempt to seduce her. The proposal is too monstrous for our language, but is not so shocking in its native tongue; Van Buck, though startled, accepts the condition. If the young lady resists his advances for eight days, Valentin binds himself to marry her. Van Buck accordingly proceeds to the house of the Baronne de Mantes, the mother of the proposed bride, and has not been long there in the amusing interior, where the Baronne is discovered busy with her needlework, with her attendant Abbé ready to render all the little services necessary to the great lady, when a noise is heard out of doors, and Valentin is brought in with a dislocated arm, having been thrown out of his carriage just at the gates of the house, where he is received with the most genuine kindness and hospitality, though nobody is aware at first that he is the proposed lover. Having thus accomplished the first step in his scheme, he tells Van Buck—who, to do him justice, is shocked and angry—in rather an amusing scene, what he means to do next. "Nothing," he says, "to

shock anybody. I shall begin by making my declaration; go on to writing notes, bribing the housemaid, lurking in all the corners; I shall then take the impression of the lock in wax, make a ladder of cords, and cut the window-pane with my ring; next I shall fall upon my knees quoting the 'Nouvelle Héloïse'; then, at last, if I don't succeed, throw myself into the lake. But in all this I shall do nothing shocking, nor say a word to hurt *les convenances.*"

Van Buck is much astonished at the impudence of the programme, and declares that he will never consent to it. Valentin asks him what he expected when he made the bet, and the uncle is trying in vain to explain his meaning, when Cécile herself is seen approaching, and Van Buck conceals himself in the bushes (the scene is laid in the garden), while Valentin throws himself down in a careless attitude under a tree. Cécile enters, and on being accosted by Valentin, asks him whether he has had any breakfast; he replies that he has not, whereupon she hurries off to order him a cup of broth. Disgusted at this prosaic behaviour, Valentin gets sulky and says to his uncle, who has again appeared out of his hiding-place, that he does not like her, that she is ugly, common, and, in short, utterly uninteresting. As Cécile, however, on hearing of his intended departure, makes various pretty attempts to detain him, he soon changes his opinion in this respect; but finding that he makes no progress, decides upon still leaving the house, and writing to declare his love. Meanwhile the Baroness and the Abbé have been waiting for Van Buck to play whist, but have settled down to piquet when he makes his appearance, asking the Baronne to listen to him for a few

moments. He then divulges Valentin's secret, declaring that the stranger who was upset outside her house is his nephew, who had chosen this way of introducing himself unknown, and making love to Cécile as a stranger. The lady's estimate of Valentin seems to be rather raised by this story, and when Van Buck mentions the enormity of his nephew's behaviour in writing to Cécile, she tells him not to be afraid; if Valentin has written to her daughter, she is sure to show her the letter.

Cécile, however, comes into the room, and sits down with no visible intention of consulting or confiding in her mother, who, after asking her again and again whether she has nothing to say to her, takes a letter from her and reads it aloud to Van Buck with a running commentary, in which her composure and indifference to the rake's attempts are very amusing. The letter is from Valentin, and couched in the usual terms: he explains the accident at the door, deplores the necessity of immediate departure, declares his love, and asks for a meeting. He is to come back when every one thinks him away, and hide among the trees; she is to make her escape from the ball, which takes place at the *château* that night, and meet him. Unfortunately, as in the 'Rivals,' the letter ends with a personal reference to the mother, saying that the escape will be easy, as the Baronne pays little attention to her, having a head like a weather-cock, which changes the composure of the mother into a violent rage; and finding from Van Buck's troubled admission that he had seen the letter, she rushes out telling him that she never wants to see him or his nephew again. Cécile remains alone, innocently astonished at once by the letter and the commotion that

has followed, which she cannot understand, as nobody objected to the marriage.

After a scene at a country inn between uncle and nephew, in which Valentin declares that he is determined to gain Cécile without marrying her, we come again to the château, where the Baronne announces to the Abbé that she has locked Cécile up in the library, where he is to keep her during her mother's enforced absence. The young prisoner is, however, too clever for the Abbé, and, after asking him vainly to let her out, pretends to be fainting. In great distress, the Abbé takes upon himself the responsibility of opening the door, whereupon Cécile, in perfect health, takes upon herself that of running away. The mother, informed of this, comes out into the wood with her inseparable attendant, and finds there Van Buck, Valentin, who had been with him, having gone to look for Cécile. His efforts have not been in vain, and we find the two young people in a clearing in the wood, deep in conversation. This scene is very clever in its cross purposes, Valentin concluding that, as she lets him talk to her of his love and accepts his attentions, he is gaining his object; she, on the contrary, taking all these pretty speeches as the natural consequence of a proper betrothal. This effect comes to a climax when Valentin, in great delight at his approaching triumph, describes to her how he trembled while writing the letter, what he suffered while waiting for her. She interrupts his impassioned words with various charming little maidenly speeches, reproving him for failing in respect to her mother, which was also a failure of respect for herself, and captivating, in spite of himself, the excited and impatient lover. "Why should not I have

come," she says at last, "when we are going to be married?" The discomfited rake jumps up and turns his back on her for a moment, then returns to make a last effort. He asks her whether she is not afraid.

"*Cécile.* Why? what should I be afraid of? Of you or the night?

Valentine. Why not of me? What makes you so bold? I am young, you are beautiful, and we are alone.

Cécile. Well, what harm is there in that?

Val. You are right, there is no harm in it: listen to me, and let me kneel at your feet.

Cécile. What is the matter? You are trembling.

Val. I tremble from fear and joy, for I am going to open to you the bottom of my heart. I am a madman of the worst kind, although what I am going to confess to you is worth nothing more than a shrug of the shoulders. I have done nothing since I cut my wisdom-teeth but play, drink, and smoke. You told me that romances shock you. I have read many and the worst. There is one that is called 'Clarissa Harlowe.' I will give it you to read when you are my wife. The hero loves a beautiful girl like you, my love, and wishes to marry her; but before that he wishes to try her. He carries her off and takes her to London; then as she resists, arrives Bedford—that is to say, Tomlinson, a captain—no, I mean Morden—no, I am wrong. In short—Lovelace was a fool, and so was I to attempt to follow his example. Thank heaven! you do not understand a word I say. I love you. I am going to marry you; there is nothing true in the world but to talk nonsense about love."

In the meantime the Baronne, who has come into the wood to look for her daughter, still unalarmed, though Van Buck, who accompanies her, is in a terrible fright, here comes upon the scene.

"*La Baronne.* I do not believe a word you say: he is too young for such wickedness.

Van Buck. Alas! madame, it is the truth

La Bar. Seduce my daughter! deceive a child! dishonour a whole family! Nonsense! I tell you it's all false; that sort of thing is not done nowadays. Look! there they are: what a charming group! Good evening, son-in-law; where on earth have you been hiding?

L'Abbe. It is unfortunate that our researches have been crowned with so tardy a success. All the guests will be gone.

Van Buck. Well, nephew, what of your fine wager——?

Valentin. Uncle, one should never distrust anybody.

Van Buck. Mon neveu, il ne faut jurer de rien."

The 'Caprice' is a slight comedy, too slight in incident, one might almost think, for the stage at all, though the dialogue is graceful and brilliant. Nothing indeed can be more amazing than that this trifle, a mere drawing-room sketch, should have played so important a part in de Musset's life, and should have been the means of deciding an important part of his career. The curtain rises upon the boudoir of Madame de Chavigny, Mathilde, who is discovered finishing a purse that she has knitted for her husband, who unfortunately comes in before the work is completed. A conversation ensues, in which she shows a sort of playful jealousy of a certain Madame de Blainville, who, she thinks, takes up too much of his time and attention. She tries, however, to bring the conversation to a point at which she may offer her present, even in its unfinished state, and asks him how he would like a red purse. He answers that he dislikes red, and *à propos* produces a purse which has been given him by somebody else. This throws the poor wife into a fearful state of distress, when her friend Madame de Léry comes

in dressed for a ball. Mathilde, blinded by her tears, has been asking what colour the purse is, and Madame de Léry, on hearing that it is blue, declares that it must be the work of Madame de Blainville, who has been working at it for seven years, during which period, she says laughingly, its ultimate destination has varied several times. When this brilliant visitor is gone, leaving husband and wife together, Mathilde tries in vain to get from him the obnoxious purse, but he refuses, and leaves her very wretched, thinking she has lost his affection, and half disposed to throw her own work in the fire, as it has failed to please him. She relents, however, thinking that the purse was not to blame, and sitting down, proceeds to sew on the tassel that was wanting. While she is thus engaged, Madame de Léry appears again at the back of the stage, announcing herself as she opens the door. It turns out that there was an immense *queue* of carriages, and that she never got near the ball, but broke the line and has come back to comfort her friend. Madame de Léry soon discovers that Mathilde has been weeping, and with a few questions finds out that the cause of this depression is Madame de Blainville's purse. Mathilde, after a struggle, reveals to her the whole story, and shows her the purse which she has worked herself. Madame de Léry instantly forms a plan to reconcile the pair, and in order to carry it out, sends Mathilde off in her carriage, giving her the garland from her own head to make her look on returning as if she had been at the ball.

Shortly after his wife's departure, Chavigny returns and finds Madame de Léry in possession. She pre-

tends to be reading, and at last asks him in a listless manner whether the ball was amusing. She has not been there, she says, but has made Mathilde go in her place. This news makes Chavigny very restless, and he walks up and down the room, firing off questions at Madame de Léry every time he passes her. She, pretending to be engrossed with what she is reading, gives him short answers, asks him questions to which he replies incoherently, and at last leaves her book, and tells Chavigny that she is surprised at his behaviour, and had hitherto thought that Mathilde was free to go where she liked. The husband assents to this, but cannot calm himself, until Madame de Léry apparently rousing up, begins to talk briskly and amuse him. The conversation is just beginning to get lively, when a servant comes in with a parcel for M. de Chavigny. He opens it and finds in it the purse worked by his wife, which her friend has managed to have brought in in this way. She of course begins to tease Chavigny about the number of presents, and especially of purses, that he is receiving, and there ensues a lively discussion about the giver, she declaring it must again be Madame de Blainville, he gradually coming to believe that it is herself. At length, by a great deal of animated *badinage*, she persuades him to give her the blue purse, which he does, saying that he will keep the red one, as he knows the hand that made it.

"*Madame de Léry.* Is it a small hand or a large one?

Chavigny. It is as charming and as soft as satin.

Mme. de L. Will you permit it to satisfy a little movement of jealousy? (*throws the blue purse into the fire*).

Chav. Ernestine, I adore you.

Mme. de L. (*looking at the burning purse, then coming nearer to Chavigny*). Then you no longer love Madame de Blainville?

Chav. By heaven! I never loved her.

Mme. de L. Nor me, Monsieur de Chavigny.

Chav. But who has told you that I thought of that woman? It is not from her that I would ever ask a moment of happiness: it is not she that could give it me.

Mme. de L. Nor I, Monsieur de Chavigny. You have just made me a little sacrifice, which is very nice of you. But I will not deceive you, the red purse is none of my making."

Chavigny again insists on knowing whose it is, but Madame de Léry tells him to think over the mystery, and over all that he has said and done, how he has gone down on his knees to her, and given her the purse to burn.

"*Mme. de Léry.* That which you give me with a laugh, without a sign of regret, that insignificant sacrifice made for a yet more insignificant caprice, you refused to the only woman that loves you, the only one whom you love.

Chavigny. Who can have told you?

Mme. de L. Speak lower, sir; here she is, coming back, and the carriage waits for me. I have no time to enforce my moral. You have a heart, and that heart will do it. If you find that Mathilde's eyes are red, dry them with this purse, which her tears will recognise, for it is your good, brave, faithful wife who has spent a fortnight making it. Good-bye; you will be angry with me to-day, but to-morrow you will feel some friendship for me, and, believe me, that is worth more than a caprice. But if you must absolutely have one, here is Mathilde, here is some one to occupy your evening, who will make you, I hope, forget the other caprice, which no one in the world, not even she, shall ever know."

Mathilde comes in; Madame de Léry goes to meet her, and embraces her; M. de Chavigny goes up to them, and taking from his wife's head the garland her friend had lent her, gives it back to its owner, saying gravely, "Pardon me, madame, she shall know it: and I shall never forget that a young priest preaches the best sermon."

'Il faut qu'une porte soit ouverte ou fermée' is another pretty little scene of a similar kind—the personages being two members of Parisian society, designated without further title Le Comte and La Marquise. The Comte has come in the hope of finding the Marquise alone, but discovers that, after all, he has come on her day for receiving, when she will soon be the centre of a crowd of people. She reassures him on this point, and proceeds to accuse him of looking as if there was something, which from respect for herself she cannot name, the matter with him. The Comte confesses, on the assurance that as she wishes to look her best at a ball that night she will not be cross, that before he came in he was suffering from *ennui*. The Marquise replies to him that she is in the same condition, and they settle down to talk, when the door-bell is heard to ring. "It is of no use," says the Comte; "here is the beginning of your procession." He is about to go away, but waits a while with the door open to have a parting word. This runs on for some time, till she bids him shut the door; the ringer of the bell is found to be a girl with a bandbox, and the interrupted conversation is resumed. The Comte then tells the Marquise that people are saying she is going to marry one M. Carnus,

whose name she has introduced. She retorts that he would not like it if she were to tell him everything that she hears from other people about him. At this the Comte is frightened, and begs her to tell him what she has heard, enlarging so much on his esteem and admiration for her that she asks whether he intends a New Year's compliment or a declaration. "What would you say," he rejoins, "if it were a declaration?" "Oh!" she replies, "I don't want any this morning. I told you that I was going to a ball; I shall be exposed to this sort of thing this evening, and my health will not permit me to indulge in them twice a-day." He upbraids her with mocking at everything, and not allowing him to pay his court to her. She asks him what he means by paying his court, and then goes on to answer her own question. It is a continual repetition of one speech—"You are beautiful." "What does that prove?" she adds; "men of fashion are but confectioners—manufacturers of sweets in disguise." Here another ring is heard, and he again rises and opens the door, when the Marquise calls him back to give him a commission: it is to take a ring of hers to the jeweller to be mended. While she is explaining what she wants, the alarm turns out to be caused by another girl with another bandbox, when she again implores him to shut the door. They soon begin to verge upon a quarrel, the Marquise telling the Comte that he has been seen with girls from the opera. He gets angry, and tells her that she is too cruel to forbid him to love her, and yet blame him for going elsewhere. She denies that she has ever forbidden him to love her, and bids him speak. He

begins by declaring his fear and timidity, when the bell rings again, and he again rises. However, just as he opens the door, there is the sound of a hail-storm, and he again shuts the door and resumes his seat. "Put down your hat, it fidgets me," says the Marquise. The Comte moves his seat closer, and begins to press his suit upon her. She refuses to take what he says as serious, and interrupts his love-making by asking him to put some wood on the fire; he, however, returns to the charge, even while he is doing this.

"*Le Comte.* If love is a play, this play, old as the world, whether it has been hissed or not, is still, all things considered, what people have found least mischievous. The parts are hackneyed, I admit; but if the play had no merit, the whole world would not know it by heart—and I am wrong in calling it old. Is it being old to be immortal?

La Marquise. M. le Comte, this is poetry.

Le C. No, madame; but these trifles, this nonsense which bores you, these compliments, these declarations, all this idle talk, are good old institutions,—formal, if you will, tiring, sometimes ridiculous, but which are the escort of another who is always young.

La M. You are getting confused; what is it that is always old, and what that is always young?

Le C. Love.

La M. Monsieur, this is eloquence.

Le C. No, madame; what I want to say is this, that love is eternally young, while the methods of expressing it are and ever will be old. The worn-out forms, the repetitions, the rags of romances which come from one's heart one knows not why,—all these surroundings, all this equipage, are like an assembly of old chamberlains, old diplomats, old ministers, the prattle of a king's ante-chamber. They all pass, but the king does not die. Love is dead; long life to Love!"

She listens, or half listens, to all this, asking him first to bring her a screen, and then a cushion. The latter he turns to his own use, throwing himself on his knees upon it, and pressing his suit. She rises and quits the room, leaving the door open, but stops just outside to hear what he has got to say. He stammers out something, that his wish, his desire——

"*La Marquise.* Is what? for you exhaust my patience. Do you imagine that I am going to be your mistress, and inherit the leavings of others? I warn you that such a proposal not only displeases, but insults me.

Le Comte. You, Marquise! You! If it were possible, it would be my whole life that I would lay at your feet,—my name, my wealth, my honour even, that I would intrust to you. Could I confound you for one moment, not with those creatures whom you only mention to grieve me, but with any other woman in the world? Could you suppose that? Do you think me so devoid of sense? Has my rashness or my foolery gone so far as to make you doubt my respect. You, who said just now that you took some pleasure in seeing me, had perhaps (is it not true, Marquise?) a little friendship for me, can you think that a man so distinguished by you—a man whom you have thought worthy of an indulgence so precious, so sweet—would not know your worth? Am I then blind or mad? You! my mistress! No—my wife!

La M. If you had said that when you came in, we should not have had any quarrel. So you want to marry me?

Le C. Certainly; I am dying to do so. I have never dared to tell you, but this has been occupying my thoughts for the last year. I would give my life-blood to be permitted to hope——

La M. Stay, Comte: you are richer than I am.

Le C. Oh no! I don't think so. And what difference does that make? I entreat you not to talk of such things.

Your smile just now makes me tremble with hope and fear. One word, for heaven's sake! my life is in your hands.

La M. I am going to give you two proverbs. The first is this, that there is nothing like understanding one another; we must talk this matter over.

Le C. Then what I have dared to say to you does not displease you?

La M. Oh no! Now here is my second proverb—a door must be either open or shut. For the last three-quarters of an hour, thanks to you, this door has neither been the one nor the other, and the room is icy. It follows that you are going to give me your arm to my mother's. Then you will go to Fossin.

Le C. To Fossin, madame? what for?

La M. My ring.

Le C. True, I was not thinking of that. Well, what about your ring, Marquise?

La M. Marquise, did you say? Well, there happens to be on the stone a little marchioness's coronet, and as it may serve as a seal—— What do you think, Comte? Perhaps they had better take off the strawberry-leaves?

Le C. You overwhelm me with joy. How shall I express——?

La M. Do shut that unhappy door!"

'Louison,' a verse comedy of little interest, tells the tale of a country girl brought up to Paris to fill a situation in a ducal house. The duke has been recently married, but no sooner sees Lisette, as she is called in her new position, than he makes hot love to her, presents her with a ring, and tries to get her to make an appointment with him. He and his wife are going to a ball, and he proposes to slip out and come back without being seen by anybody, that they may enjoy a *tête-à-tête*. Lisette cannot quite understand his meaning, and is disturbed in her meditations by the unexpected arrival

of Berthand, her country lover, who has followed her to Paris, where he has got a situation as clerk to an apothecary. While they talk, the duke's mother, la Maréchale, comes in with the duke and his wife. The duchess refuses to go to the ball, pleading fatigue; and the duke, much annoyed by the destruction of his plot against Lisette, goes out declaring that he will go to the ball by himself. The duchess is jealous of Lisette, and allows the Maréchale to discover it, while Berthand, on his side, also has his suspicions aroused; and the Maréchale, when she sees the diamond ring on the finger of the waiting-woman, is at once conscious that these suspicions are justified, and will not listen to the girl's protestations that she does not love the duke. The young wife, however, changes her opinion, and apologising to Lisette for her jealousy, entreats her to go in her place to the ball, with her domino and mask, and watch the duke's movements. After a long conversation with her mother-in-law, the duchess falls asleep, and presently the duke enters in a towering rage, having been accosted at the ball by Lisette, who, instead of waiting for him as arranged, has appeared under Berthand's protection at the supper-table. He then perceives his wife asleep, and gradually his fancy for Louison dies away and his love for the duchess returns, so that his mother coming in finds him kneeling at the feet of his sleeping wife. She awakes, every cloud disappears, and Lisette and Berthand go on their way together, the Maréchale promising to settle matters with the girl's father and to be responsible for the dowry.

'On ne saurait penser à tout,' though a little more

important, takes the form rather of an extravaganza than of a serious dramatic performance. The two chief characters are an extraordinary pair of absent-minded people whose failures in memory and attention are amusing enough, though exaggerated and sometimes irritating. The plot, if plot it can be called, turns on the fact that the hero, the Marquis de Valberg, has received a diplomatic appointment of a grotesque character, through the exertions of his uncle, the Baron, who, having made an appointment with his nephew, finds only Germain, his servant, to whom he explains that the Marquis ought to be waiting for him, his luggage packed, and all ready to start, seeing that the Grand Duchess of Saxe-Gotha has just had a child, and the king has chosen de Valberg and his uncle to convey to her his congratulations. Germain replies that his master has gone out, and, when the Baron complains of his nephew's forgetfulness, corrects him by saying, "No, he does not forget; he is only thinking of something else." The Baron, still angry, reiterates his complaints.

"*Le Baron.* He ought to be ready to start, at latest to-morrow morning, for Germany. Has he given no orders about his departure?

Germain. No, sir. But this morning, before he went out, he opened a big travelling trunk, and walked up and down beside it for some time.

Le B. And what did he put into it?

Ger. A piece of music.

Le B. A piece of music!

Ger. Yes, sir; and after doing this, he shut the trunk with great care, and put the key in his pocket."

The servant continues to tell extraordinary stories about his master's absence of mind, his having covered

his strawberries with snuff instead of sugar, and other things of the same kind, which the Baron himself caps by saying that he has seen the Marquis, when a lady was offering him a cup of tea, put thirty sous in it, under the impression that she was collecting for the poor. Just as they are deploring this habit, which seems to unfit the Marquis for his diplomatic expedition, he comes in furious at having lost a piece of music, which Germain shrewdly conjectures to be the same as he so carefully locked away in the morning. The Baron greets him, and asks whether he is ready to go: he answers that, if he is refused, he is ready to go away anywhere. It turns out that he is anxious to marry the Comtesse de Vernon, in whose house this interview takes place, and that while his uncle is talking of the journey to Gotha, the nephew's thoughts are occupied by his love for the Comtesse. At last he is brought to reason, and declares himself ready to obey the king's commands: he then asks Germain whether all his things are ready, and is a little disconcerted when the valet reminds him that he locked the trunk after putting his music into it, and carried off the key. He gives him the key, and then desires to know what is the law-suit about which his uncle has been talking. The Baron declares that when he spoke of the Court he meant the Court of Saxe-Gotha, and that he must go at once to get the credentials; de Valberg then assures him that when he returns the marriage will be celebrated. This is the first the Baron has heard of the marriage, and he implores his nephew not to let anything interfere with his journey: the Marquis promises to propose to the Comtesse at once, if he can remember it, and the Baron

goes off very little satisfied. The Comtesse now comes in, and, at the Marquis's request, tells her maid to say that she is not at home to anybody—an order followed by such a list of exceptions that it soon comes to be "yesterday's list," which means everybody that comes. Left alone, the Marquis does his best to bring the Comtesse to the point, but her interest seems to be entirely taken up by a search for a song that she has lost. This of course turns out once more to be the piece of music which de Valberg has locked up in his trunk, and which is brought in by Germain. The Marquis then begins to sing it, when Victoire, the maid, announces the arrival of some stuffs, and the lady's interest is at once diverted. Not a word will she listen to about the journey to Germany, but drags him off to see the stuffs. Germain and Victoire are left alone, and the maid, seeing the song on the piano, writes a few words on it. The servants fly at the approach of their master and mistress, and the Comtesse and Marquis again come on the stage. An attempt is made to sing the song, but both are thinking about the stuffs, and a discussion arises about two colours, in which de Valberg is brought to say that, if he had a wife, she would have to wear what colour he liked, to which the Comtesse replies that in that case he will die a bachelor. He, taking this as a refusal of his suit, is overwhelmed by despair, and she, vexed by his stupidity, dismisses him angrily. "Do as you please; you are incomprehensible and intolerable. Leave me to my music. (*Sees the writing.*) Why, what is this?"

Valberg, sitting in a corner of the room while she makes this exclamation, goes on talking to himself of his misfortune in having, he knows not how, offended the

woman he loves; then rising, paces up and down the room, without seeing that the Comtesse is anxious to attract his attention to the writing on the song. He goes on muttering to himself—

"*Le Marquis.* I must doubtless have committed some unpardonable fault.

La Comtesse (*holding the song out to him*). Valberg, read this.

Le M. Unpardonable? that is not possible. When I see her again she will forgive me. Come, Germain, I am going out. Yes; certainly I must see her. She is so good, so indulgent! and so gracious and so beautiful! There is no woman to compare with her.

La C. (*aside*). I must pass over his distraction.

Le M. It is true that she is a fearful coquette, and pitiably lazy. Her eternal giddiness——

La C. (*aside*). The portrait is getting spoiled. (*Aloud.*) Monsieur de Valberg.

Le M. Could her perpetual giddiness suit a reasonable man? Would she have that calm, that presence of mind, that evenness of character, that are necessary in household matters? I should have plenty to do with such a wife.

La C. This is worth listening to.

Le M. But then she is such a good musician—Germain! —ah! how happy we should be, by ourselves, in some peaceful retreat, with a few friends, with everything she loves! for I should be sure to love it too.

La C. That's good news.

Le M. But no; she loves the world and society!—Germain!—Well, I should not be jealous; who could be of such a woman?—Germain!—I should let her do what she liked; I would put my pride in seeing her admired; I would trust her as myself. And if ever she were to betray me . . . Germain!—I should plunge a dagger in her heart.

La C. (*taking his hand*). Oh no, you would not, Monsieur de Valberg.

Le M. You, Comtesse!—good heavens! I had no idea that——

La C. Before killing me, read this."

She gives him the song, upon which is written the following note: "Monsieur le Marquis is entreated to be kind enough to remember to marry Madame la Comtesse before leaving for Germany." This brings back the journey to Germany to his mind: he proposes to the Comtesse to come with him, to publish the banns at the different relays, and to be married when they get there. She demurs, asking him whether he thinks her worthy, and brings up against him all that he had said in his excitement when he was talking to himself, unconscious of her presence. However, they are soon reconciled, and both begin to pack up in the same reckless manner, the Marquis putting into the trunk, among other things, his watch and his purse. They are employed in this ridiculous fashion when the Baron comes in in a great hurry, apologising for his rudeness, and excusing himself on the ground that he brings unexpected and important news. The Grand Duchess of Gotha is dead; and so the diplomatic mission, and the Marquis's chance of bringing himself under the king's notice, come at once to an end. The young man, however, seems to care little about it, having only looked upon the mission as a journey to Germany with the Comtesse, whom he promises now to take wherever she pleases, consoling his uncle with the proverb, "One can't think of everything."

'Carmosine' is an essay in pure romance, founded upon a story taken from Boccaccio, of a young lady, the

daughter of a doctor, who, having seen the King of Sicily in a tournament, has fallen deeply and hopelessly in love with him, and is gradually sinking into a dangerous state of melancholy. She has two suitors, Ser Vespasiano, described as an adventurer, and a young lawyer called Perillo, to whom she was much attached until this mad passion came upon her. Carmosine's mother favours the claims of the knight, whom the father laughs at, saying that he is a fool, and fell at the first touch in the tournament; while he is inclined to encourage Perillo, whose career he has been watching with interest. Perillo arrives fresh from his examinations, in which he has been entirely successful; but is made sorrowful in the height of his joy by hearing from Maître Bernard, Carmosine's father, that she is very ill, and that the cause of her illness cannot be discovered. The mother appears, saying that the girl feels much better, and wishes to go out into the garden, and as Maître Bernard is afraid of the effect of Perillo's sudden appearance, he makes the young lover conceal himself behind the tapestry. She comes in and relates to her father a remarkable dream that she has had, and that has made her happy.

"I dreamt," she says, "that I was standing on the doorstep of our house. A great *fête* was going on. I saw the people of the town pass before me, all in their best dresses—great ladies, knights—no; I am wrong, it was people like ourselves. First all our neighbours and friends, and then a crowd, an innumerable crowd, coming down the Grand' Rue, and constantly renewing itself. The more the stream flowed on the larger it grew, and everybody was going towards the church, which was brilliantly lighted up. I could hear in the distance the sound of the organ, the holy

chants, and a heavenly harmony of harps and sweet voices, such as has never sounded in my ears before. The crowd seemed to be impatient to arrive as soon as possible at the church, as if some great mystery, never to be seen again, was being disclosed. While I was looking at all this, a strange restlessness came over me; but I had no desire to follow the passers-by. Far away on the horizon I saw a traveller making his way painfully through the dust. He was hastening on with all his power, but he made little progress; and I could see clearly that he wanted to come to me. As for me, I was waiting for him; it seemed to me that he was to take me to this *fête*. I felt his desire and I shared it. I was ignorant of the obstacles in his way, but in my thoughts I united my efforts to his; my heart was beating fast, and yet I remained without moving, without the power to make one step towards him. How long this vision lasted I cannot tell—perhaps a minute—but in my dream it seemed years. At last he reached me and took my hand, and at once the irresistible power that held me in the same spot yielded, and I could walk. An indescribable joy seized upon me; I had broken my bonds, I was free. As we were both starting off in great haste, I turned to look at my phantom, and I recognised Perillo."

Maître Bernard is much pleased at first with this tale, and thinks that it shows well for Perillo's chances, but he is soon undeceived; the only thing that has made his daughter happy is the sense of being able to walk, and she almost faints when he pleads the young lawyer's cause. Her mother comes in and the family sit down to supper, the party being completed, contrary to the wishes of all, except the mother, by the presence of Ser Vespasiano. The meal has scarcely commenced when they hear the voice of Minuccio outside and call him in. This man is a troubadour, patronised by the king and renowned for his musical powers. He soon finds out the

secret of Carmosine, that she is pining for something beyond her reach; and when supper is ended, she begs her father to leave her alone with Minuccio. The rest, Ser Vespasiano included, retire, and the troubadour receives the maiden's confidence: she acknowledges her hopeless but incurable love for the king, and, while resolving to die of it, begs him to find some way of informing the king of her sorrow. Minuccio pledges himself to do his best.

The scene is now transferred to a certain gallery in the palace, where it is the king's gracious custom to pass and listen to any of his subjects who wish to speak to him. Here Perillo, who has come to take service in the wars, meets Minuccio, whose mind is entirely occupied by the song which he is composing, and which is destined to convey to the king's ear the love and suffering of Carmosine. Vespasiano too has joined the party full of his usual brags, when the king and queen come in, and Perillo is beckoned to approach. He comes and kneels at the feet of the king and asks for a place in the army. "Why do you come to me?" asks the monarch; "ask my officers." On his answering, however, that the king alone could decide the fate of his life, he obtains a patient and successful hearing. When Perillo's prayer is granted, he is succeeded by Minuccio, who comes before their majesties with a train of young girls teasing him for a song; he is called by the king and desired to sing something, while the queen reproaches him for never coming near her in the absence of the king. When he is asked if he has brought his viol, the troubadour seizes the opportunity, and answers that he has not yet got the music of his new romance, but only the words. The

queen asks whether the words are his or Cipolla's; he says the author is a young lady, charming, beautiful, and good, lovable and modest, and the song is a complaint of love. "Is she so lovable," asks the queen, "and yet not loved?" He says no, and that she is dying of love. Heaven has given her every requisite for happiness; a loving father, rich and learned, who would sacrifice everything he possessed to satisfy her slightest desire; she would have but to express the wish to see a crowd of lovers, young, rich, brilliant, even noble, at her feet. But till she was eighteen her heart had never spoken; one alone of her admirers was even tolerated. It happened, however, one day that she saw a cavalier going to the rejoicings on the queen's birthday. She followed him, saw him in the tournament, where he conquered. One look decided her life. Since then she had fallen into a strange melancholy; she knew that the man she loved was married to another, but nursed her love, vain as she knew it to be, in secret, refusing all attempts to cure her, and now lay dying, passing away like the snow before the sun. The man she loved had no acquaintance with her, perhaps had never seen her; but it was her great desire that he should know the reason of her death; and thus her sorrow speaks:—

"Go, love, and tell him why I suffer here,
Go to my lord and tell him that I die,
And that, would he to my assistance hie,
Death's cruelties no more my heart would fear.
For his compassion on my knees I pray;
Be kind, dear love, go forth to his abode,
Say that in prayer and tears I pass the day,
That death alone can take away my load.

I burn—and know not when the hour shall be
Which from my cherished grief will set me free.
Death waits for me ; if he his help denies
To lift me from that tomb which yawns below,
There shall I sleep, with my sweet memories.
Oh, go, good love ! let him my sorrow know.
Since on that day, seeing him victor crowned,
Thou forcedst me to bow me to thy sway,
'Twas but a moment, and no heart had I
To him my timid fancy to portray,
That weighs me down on this my dying day,
That, and that only, makes me fear to die.
Yet might it not displease him, my distress
When my pale cheeks to him more plainly show ;
Ne'er could I dare my thoughts to him confess,
Alas ! kind love, let him my sorrow know.
Since then, love, thou refusest to impart,
For all my prayerful sadness, this one thing,
That my dear lord should read within my heart
Or see the tears that drown its suffering ;
Tell him, and let him know thou dost not lie,
That I should live if we had never met,
That a Sicilian maid, this story tell,
Once saw him fight, and do his duty well,
In his own country, let him not forget,
And that to make my sorrow known I die."

On hearing this, the queen asks Minuccio whether it was really written by a young girl, and when he says that it was, gives him a ring from her own finger to take to her, with the message that she has a friend. The king asks to whom the verses are addressed, and Minuccio answers that he is bound by a promise not to reveal the secret to any one but the king in person. His majesty's curiosity being great, he orders the young ladies to retire, and the queen saying that Minuccio

must keep his promise, leaves the room of her own accord. The minstrel then asks the king whether he has forgotten who was the victor in the last tournament, when he, with an exclamation hardly proper for a crowned head, answers, "It was myself." Minuccio then tells him that it is indeed to him that the verses he has heard are addressed, and that the author lives close to his palace. He goes on to say that she is expecting death, and that she has prayed him to speak for her; that her beauty, her suffering, and her resignation are as true as her love, and that her name is Carmosine. The king at once says that he must see her, and on Minuccio pleading her weakness, takes him to consult the queen.

The next scene shows Carmosine seated in a garden in company with her father, Perillo, and Minuccio, who has just repeated to him the song sung to the king. Carmosine is enchanted by it, Perillo doubtful, while Maître Bernard declares it too melancholy, a song for a funeral; his daughter, however, asks Minuccio for the verses and reads them over again. The family party is dispersed by the entry of Ser Vespasiano vastly pleased with himself; Carmosine is led away by Perillo, and Minuccio and Maître Bernard are left together. The old man is still angry with the song, which he says only served to increase her sadness. Minuccio tells him to wait till vespers and all will be well. Maître Bernard goes out perfectly mystified, and Carmosine and Perillo come in, the former in the last stage of melancholy, though when Perillo leaves her alone, she consoles herself a little with the ring Minuccio has brought to her.

The bell rings at the door, and two veiled women come in; they ask whether Maître Bernard lives there, and being told that the lady they see is Carmosine, the master's daughter, they say that their business is with her. One of these strangers is the queen, who announces herself as a distant relation of Perillo, occupying a high position at the Court of Spain, and willing to look after his fortunes if he deserves it. On this account she asks Carmosine whether, if Perillo asked her hand she would give it to him, and being questioned as to her object in introducing this subject, says, that she has a young friend like Carmosine in age and beauty who is suffering from melancholy or some secret sorrow which she is hiding, and that her idea is to marry this girl, take her to Court and try to distract her attention, for living in solitude and brooding over one thought is dangerous work for a young head, and often in the search for the impossible one loses the way to happiness. She then suggests to Carmosine, who insists that a woman cannot marry one man while her heart is full of love for another, that there may be cases where the loved object is separated, by marriage, or perhaps might be a prince or a king whose rank is an impassable barrier. At this Carmosine begins to suspect something, a feeling which increases when the queen goes on to suggest that the sister or wife of such a prince has found out the girl's secret, and, far from feeling any jealousy or hate, undertakes to console her, talk to her, support her, snatch her from her retreat, and give her a place in the very palace of her spouse. Why should such a one think it wonderful that her husband, the most valiant knight in the whole kingdom, should in-

spire an easily comprehensible feeling? She might, in short, having no mistrust or fear of a rival, be willing that this child, who has dared to love so high, should avow that love, so that emerging from its solitude, it might gain purity from the fuller light, and nobility from its object. Carmosine guesses that it is the queen, and that Minuccio has betrayed her, and repeats that there is nothing left for her but to die, when the queen tells her that the message which she brings is from the king, that it is the king's desire that she should live and recover her health; that, to use his own words, it would be a misfortune if so beautiful a being were to perish for so brave a love. The queen then adds that she herself wished to have Carmosine among her maids of honour, who were all her friends, where she could see the king every day, and instead of fighting this love, should yield to the true impulse of her soul towards what is good and beautiful. For when one loves without blushing, the royal lady adds, one can love without suffering, since shame and remorse only exist where the love is not innocent.

The sound of trumpets now warns them that the king has left the palace; they see at the same time a crowd pressing towards the church, and Carmosine remembers that it is a feast-day, and calls back her dream. It is the hour of the benediction, when the priest is raising the Host above his head, and Carmosine sinks on her knees, murmuring, "Pardon me." The queen joins her, saying, "Let us pray together; let us ask God what answer you are to give your king."

The king now enters with Perillo by his side, followed by Bernard and his wife, Vespasiano and Minuccio.

He calls to Carmosine to come to him, and takes her hand :—

"*King.* What does this mean, my fair maid? You who are young, and made to gladden the hearts of others, you let yourself be sorrowful? We entreat you, for love of us, to be pleased to take courage, and recover your health speedily.

Carmosine. Sire, it is my lack of strength to bear too great a trouble which is the cause of my sufferings. Since you have been able to take pity on me, I hope that God will deliver me.

King. That is very well, but it is not all; you must obey me on another point. Has some one told you what I wish?

Car. Sire, I have been told of all the goodness, all the compassion you have deigned to have for me.

King. Nothing else?—(*To the* QUEEN.) Is that true, Constance?

Queen. Not quite.

King. Beautiful Carmosine, I will speak as a king and as a friend. The great love which you have borne towards us has raised you high in honour in our sight; and the honour that we wish to confer on you in return is to give you with our own hand, praying you to accept him, the husband we have chosen for you. (*He beckons to* PERILLO, *who comes forward and bows.*) After which our will is always to call ourselves your knight, and to bear in our tournaments your device and colours, without asking anything from you, for this promise, but one kiss.

Queen. Give it to him, my child, I am not jealous.

Car. (*presenting her forehead for the King to kiss*). Sire, the Queen has answered for me."

'Bettine' is a little drama of lively action and considerable feeling. Bettine is a *prima donna* who has left the stage, and is about to marry the Baron Steinberg, to whose house she has come for the marriage. Bettine herself, the Marquis Stéfani, an old friend of

hers, and Calabre, Steinberg's servant, constitute the entire *dramatis personæ*. The scene opens with a dialogue between Calabre and the notary who has come with the papers, and whose comic inquiry, "But where are the bride and bridegroom?" is again and again repeated as the various scenes go on. Steinberg, who appears first, explains his circumstances to Calabre in the confidential mood of a master with an old and faithful servant. It appears that he has grave doubts about the marriage—though he has nothing to say against Bettine. It is a great responsibility, he says, to marry an opera-singer; and besides, he is poor—he has nothing to maintain her upon. Calabre, by a few pointed questions, soon finds out that his master has been gambling at the house of a certain princess who lives near, and has lost a large sum of money. While they talk, a card is brought in for Bettine, bearing the name of the Marquis Stéfani, a gentleman who is walking in the gardens waiting till the lady is visible. Steinberg reflects for a moment, remembers that Stéfani was the name of a great admirer of Bettine in her opera days, and gives Calabre instructions to tell Bettine that he wishes her not to receive the visitor. He then goes off to the princess's house to have his revenge. The notary comes out again with his eternal question, and Bettine at length appears. After she has made anxious inquiries after Steinberg, she recognises Stéfani, whose unexpected appearance gives her great pleasure, which she does not try to conceal, laughing at the idea that Steinberg could wish to prevent her from seeing Stéfani, her old friend, whom she loves with all her heart. She tells him the story of her love—how Steinberg and she

have fled to be married quietly far from the notice of the world. Stéfani, on hearing Steinberg's name, remembers that he has just seen him at the princess's house. Bettine is greatly surprised and hurt at this insult, when she and the notary are waiting, and a little interrogation makes Calabre confess that his master has ridden into the town to get money to pay his losses. Stéfani, sooner than remain to hear what was not for a stranger's ears, makes his adieus, saying that he will send her a bouquet.

Steinberg, who appears soon after in great agitation, is extremely angry when he finds that Bettine has not only received, but had a long conversation with Stéfani, and is, besides, in desperation about his own affairs. He tells Calabre, who offers him his savings to pay his losses, that he wants a hundred thousand francs. This is overheard by Bettine, who rushes in asking why he wants so large a sum. He tries to evade her question, but at last confesses that he is very wretched. In an endeavour to cheer him, she goes to the piano and begins a song, which they sing together, when Calabre enters with a letter for the Baron and a box for Bettine. Steinberg goes out at once with his letter, and Bettine, opening the box, finds it to contain a bouquet in rich jewels, with a note from Stéfani saying, that as he will not be on the spot to renew the faded flowers of an ordinary bouquet, he begs to be allowed to send her one that will not fade. Steinberg returns, insists on seeing the present, and after an outburst of jealous annoyance, informs Bettine that he cannot marry her, as he has no longer the means to support her. Bettine implores him to tell her straight out what is the cause of this sudden change. He points

to the box that contain's Stéfani's present, saying, "That is the cause," and rushes out. Dismayed, but still constant to her love, she sends Calabre to her agent, with an order for the money to be paid out of her own funds to the man to whom Steinberg is indebted, without letting him know from whom it comes. While she awaits the servant's return, Stéfani again enters, and is with her when Calabre appears to say that the money has been paid, and to bring her a note from his master. This letter is to the effect that he is obliged to thank her for what she has done, though without his consent, that he must at once take measures to repay it, and that he is going to Rome with a lady whom she knows. It is, in short, a shameless declaration that he has gone away with the princess, and thrown over his intended bride. Bettine faints, but recovers herself, and checks Stéfani when he vows vengeance, which she says would give her no satisfaction. Steinberg has said in his letter, "I know that I do not leave you alone," and the Marquis sees that jealousy of himself has something to do with the quarrel. He is thus emboldened to propose himself as a substitute for the departed bridegroom, urging her to return to her profession, and resume her natural life under his protection as her husband. She declares that it is impossible, but with gratitude for his affection; and as he kisses her hand, the notary comes out of the summer-house where he has been waiting so long, and complains to Calabre that, as he has finished his refreshments, and sees nothing of the bridal couple, he is now going back to the town. "Wait a little longer," says Calabre, pointing to Bettine, with her hand still in Stéfani's.

CHAPTER V.

THE PROSE WORKS.

THE most important as well as the longest of de Musset's prose works is 'La Confession d'un Enfant du Siècle,' which has sometimes been thought to be a sort of autobiography of the poet. This idea, however, seems inconsistent with what we know from other sources of his life, as well as with the little preface that heads the story: "To enable one to write the history of one's life, one must have lived it out, therefore it is not my life that I am writing." There is no doubt, however, that the picture of life contained in the 'Confession' was, to a great extent, drawn from de Musset's experience as well as observation. Like many others of the author's works, it was begun, laid aside for a time, and resumed and completed when de Musset's mind was clouded with sorrow. It was after the finishing of the 'Nuit de Decembre,' that the poet in his grief took up the unfinished 'Confession,' with the intention of giving his hero better luck in the end than he had himself experienced; and with this view determined to finish the story at the time when Brigitte avows her love for Octave. "Here," he says, "I have brought him to the moment

of consolation; let us go no further; the to-morrow would be too painful." However, he eventually yielded to the remonstrances of his friends, whose unanimous opinion was that such an ending would detract from the value of the book—and began, in spite of his convictions, to work at the "to-morrow," the sadness of which fully verifies his prediction.

Paul de Musset tells us that his brother had no intention of writing a chronicle of his own youth, nor had he drawn his facts from his own memory, but that he observed all that he saw living, moving, and stirring around him, and gathered thus whatever might be the diagnostic symptoms of the moral disease that he was attempting to describe, and all that could support the philosophical theory which gives to the work a view higher than that of a mere story of the manners of the time. "Of the real details," he says, "many have been developed and modified so as to change them into points of character. Were one to try to separate the real from that which has been brought in by the claims of art and the necessities of his cause, it would soon be seen that the task was impossible, and that, even if done, it would throw no light upon the life of the author." The chief point, however, that would probably strike the reader who goes through to the end of the work,—through the long pages of philosophical musing, and the varied adventures of the hero,—would be the constant, unseen, but certain progress of that moral disease in the mind that has had, too soon, revealed to it the evil side of life and the world we live in. Early in his life, the hero gets involved in the course of dissipation that seems inevitable in the history of young students in France.

His innocent heart is conquered by one of the young women who share their gaiety, and he is sitting opposite to her at table, when he finds out that she is casting loving glances at a friend and fellow-student of his. Dismayed and astonished at such falsehood, he rushes out of the room, sends a friend to the new object of her affections, fights a duel with him, and is wounded in the arm. While ill he is visited by Desgenais, the evil genius of the work, an older man, sceptical and *blasé*, who sows the seeds of his own horrible creed in the smarting young heart of Octave. Weakened by his wound, almost maddened by the falseness of his first love, the invalid listens, and is lost. From this point to the end of the 'Confession,' we find constant traces of the fatal effect of this new friendship. Paul de Musset says with truth that so powerful a type cannot possibly be a portrait from real life. Indeed, Desgenais is a kind of abstract, a specimen of a class of men who certainly existed then as now, and whom Alfred designated "men of the flesh," in contrast with the men of feeling, of whom Octave is the representative type. And it is not without a struggle that the young man yields. He declares that before taking life by its pleasant side, which seems to him the dangerous side, he will try everything. But all his efforts fail, and he finds himself at last fairly launched upon a life without morality or law, without belief in anything in heaven or earth. A short career of dissipation with Desgenais is beginning to tire him, when the sudden death of his father takes him away from this dangerous companion, and he manages to get down to the country too late to

see his father alive, but in time to read the last words he had written in his diary: "Good-bye, my son; I love thee."

This was a great blow to the young man, and the immediate effect of it was that for a time he remained alone in the country house where his father had lived and died. During these months he tells us he thought neither of the past nor the future. He held a book in his hand, but could not read it: "I had no thoughts; all in me was silent: I had received a blow so violent, and at the same time so lasting, that I remained there as a being purely passive, with no signs of any possible reaction in me." After a time, however, he takes heart, and begins to look over his father's papers. This work was what was wanted to clear his head, and bring his mind to better ends by the perusal of the daily thoughts of a good man; and while the process of regeneration is going on, a chance meeting gives rise to an acquaintance which becomes the chief interest in his life. As he is passing by the village, he sees a young lady come out of a house standing by itself. Attracted by the way in which a goat runs up to her, he asks who lives there, and learns that it is inhabited by an old lady and a young one called Madame Pierson. He meets her at the deathbed of a farmer's wife, and their acquaintance grows rapidly into friendship, and in a very short time to love. He declares his attachment to her, and is kindly but decidedly rejected; later, however, Madame Pierson sends him to Strasburg to do some commission from her to a relation of hers in that town. He returns much sooner than she has expected, and is told by Mercanson, a priest whom he has seen at her

house, that she is severely indisposed, and will not be able to see him for a week. Doubting the truth of this, he goes to her house, and is refused admission: so that when at last he meets her in the woods, it is only by chance, in one of his despairing walks. After this she avoids him no longer, the intercourse continues, and one day, when they are riding together, she allows him to discover that his love is returned.

Octave has occupied the position of favoured and accepted lover for two days, when his old scepticism suddenly comes over him again. She is playing an air to him, which she says, by way of a joke, is composed by herself; he asks for it again, walking up and down during the performance and struggling with himself, when at last he says, "Really, you lie so well! That air yours? you then find it so easy to lie?" She looks at him in surprise, then tries to believe that he is jesting too, but seeing him still pale and silent, is dismayed by his seriousness. "You may smile at this, reader," says the young man, "but I, who write it, still shudder at it. Misfortunes have their symptoms like diseases, and there is nothing so much dreaded at sea as the little black cloud on the horizon." His reflections upon this sudden doubt are dreadful but interesting; it is the old struggle over again, and as he puts down a book she has asked him not to look into, he fancies that he sees the grim face of Desgenais smiling with his icy smile, and hears him whispering in his ear. He keeps his eyes on the book, and all the old sneers about women come before his mind, with a greater sense of reality and truth than he had ever felt before, and with an awful sadness he exclaims, "Is the past a

ghost? does it rise up from its tomb? Ah, wretched man that I am! am I going to lose the power to love?" Perhaps the utter despair, the hopeless feeling of failure, cannot be better expressed than in Octave's own words. He says: "But the sufferings that I had endured, the memory of the perfidy that I had witnessed, the horrible cure that I had imposed upon myself, the talk of my friends, the corruptions of the world that I had crossed, the sad truths that I had seen in it, those too which, without knowing them, I had guessed and understood by some fatal intelligence—in short, debauch, contempt of love, abuse of all things, these were what I had in my heart, though as yet I did not suspect their presence; and now, just at the moment when I thought that I had found a new vista to hope and life, all these sleeping furies woke, seized me by the throat, screaming to me that they were there."

For a short time he recovers from this mood, but still has a wish to know something more about Brigitte's former life, upon which he questions his servant, who tells him something vague about a man called Dalens. Nothing definite is said, but enough to awake a dormant jealousy, and to make Octave more anxious than ever to know the truth. In this state of mind he comes across Mercanson, who wonders that he has not heard of Dalens before, whose intimacy with Brigitte was the common talk of the country. These lies, as they really are, Octave's suspicious mind takes in at once, and when next he meets Brigitte he questions her about this man, telling her, without naming the informer, that he has heard that their intimacy was notorious. This time he at last succeeds in wounding the pride of the slandered

lady, who, when she has regained her composure, takes out a packet of letters from Dalens, and insists upon Octave reading them. She then tells him that he has a right to hear the history of her life, and that she is going to tell him everything, when the pallor of her face and her evident sufferings work again upon the better part of the lover, and he interrupts her by a confession of his own worthlessness, and an account of the way in which he was led to destruction in his youth. A reconciliation follows this outburst, and both of them dismiss the name and memory of Dalens from their minds. But no reconciliation could last long with Octave in this state of mind: no longer devoted to libertinism, his body, he says, reminded him of the days when he was so, and constantly, as he watched Brigitte, memories of worthless women, who had used the same words, or the same gestures, came into his mind. At last the crisis arrived; in one of his bad moments he had attempted to begin a flirtation with a neighbour of theirs, a Madame Daniel, in order to make Brigitte jealous, and one day he persuaded her to go to a ball with him to meet this lady. He himself pays Madame Daniel marked attention, dances with her several times, but yet feels uneasy as he sees the look on Brigitte's face. Nothing seems to have been said about it for two or three days, when a quarrel broke out, Octave telling Brigitte that he could not stand her eternal jealousy, that Madame Daniel was only an experiment to test her, and that if she was tired of her life with him, she had better break it off. "So be it," says she; "you are no longer the man that I loved." He answers her bitterly, leaves the room, and does not

see her for a day: when the good impulse comes in its turn, he abuses himself, declares that he is not only mad, but a madman of the worst sort, to cause suffering to the noblest, the best of God's creatures. Rushing into the garden on his way to throw himself at her feet, he sees a light in her window; he advances in a state of doubt; he had left her in tears, perhaps he should find her laughing, having forgotten him altogether. He approaches the door, which luckily has been left ajar, on tiptoe, and looking in, he sees Brigitte seated at her table, writing in a private book. In her left hand was a box of white wood, at which she cast from time to time a tremulous glance. Everything in the room seemed to have been put in order, the papers in packets on her writing-table, as if they had just been arranged. In pushing the door a little further open, he makes a noise, whereupon she rises, shuts the desk, and coming to the door, says with a smile:—

"Octave, my friend, we are both like children. Our quarrel has no sense in it, and if you had not come back to me to-night, I should have gone to you. Forgive me, I was in the wrong. Madame Daniel dines with us to-morrow; see if you can give me cause to repent what you call my despotism. So long as you love me, I am happy: let us forget the past, for fear of spoiling our happiness."

Things now go well for a time, until Brigitte announces that her aunt, the only relation she has left, is dead, and that she must leave the place. He dissuades her from this purpose, but soon finds out that Mercanson has been spreading scandalous accounts about Brigitte and himself; and with the old feelings strong

upon him, begins to treat her as if she were no better than the gossips called her; in fact, as he confesses, he was living, as often had happened before, two lives. A quarter of an hour after, a gross insult saw him on his knees praying for forgiveness; forgiven, he goes home more madly in love than ever, but wakes up in the morning mocking at everything and believing nothing. Once being with her on a rainy evening, he proposes to fill up the time before supper with a sort of masquerade, it being the time of carnival. While looking for costumes to wear, Octave opens a cupboard in which he finds a book—the book, in fact, in which he had often seen Brigitte writing. He takes it down, opens it, and finds on the first page these words written, "This is my will," which he goes on to read, and finds in it a calm account of all that he and his love have made her suffer, a declaration that she loves him and will die when he forsakes her, putting an end to her life by poison, and expressly forbidding her heirs or friends to take any proceedings against Octave. On the same shelf he finds the box that he has seen, full of a fine white powder; he raises it to his lips, when she utters a great cry and rushes to him. He at once stops her, saying, "Brigitte, bid me farewell; I take this box with me and I go; if you wish to spare me the guilt of a murder, you will live and forget me. I go to-night without asking for your pardon; even if you forgave me, God could not. Give me one last kiss." Three hours afterwards the post-chaise is at the door, he is ready to start; he gropes his way through the rain to the carriage, the postilion starts off, and he feels two arms thrown round

him, and a kiss, which is a half sob, upon his lips. It is of course Brigitte, and they go off together.

They arrive in Paris, make all their preparations for a long journey, but just at the time for starting she complains of cold; and when he comes back, having secured their places, she falls senseless at his feet. The journey is of course put off, and at last she shows him a letter from her relations, saying that her departure had dishonoured her, that everybody knew the reason of it, and that if she did not return at once, none of her family would acknowledge or recognise her—and confesses that this is the cause of her illness. While she still lingers in Paris to recover her strength, Octave has, however, time to get jealous again, and at last Brigitte opens her heart to him and tells him what she has suffered in trying to cure him,—how she has given it up as hopeless at night, and awakened in the morning to try again. In this explanation she puts out all her energy, and at last falls almost fainting into his arms; when she recovers and falls asleep, Octave remains in the room, feeling more and more the sting of the consciousness of what he has done. She has never spoken to him so openly before, and now that he knows what her sufferings have been, he sees more and more clearly that they have all been his work; that what his love had begun, his cruel jealousy and neglect had completed; and that as living on with Brigitte and living without her seem equally impossible, the time has come for him to die. But then, as he looks at Brigitte, the thought comes over him how can he die, and leave her for another man to love? In his new excitement he picks up a knife as he is

walking up and down the room, and approaches the bed. He turns down the clothes to find her heart, but on the white breast he sees a little crucifix which Brigitte's aunt had given her, and he stops, muttering, "O my God, thou art there!" This scene, which would be very effective on the stage, is curious; because, though Octave throughout has evidently a belief in a God of some sort, he never shows any signs of Christian feeling or capability of being thus moved by the sight of a crucifix, when he in his madness was intent upon a crime. He muses upon it, startled and penitent, at last winding up with a sort of confession of faith.

"It was no vain terror," he says, "that just now arrested my hand. Who could see me? I was alone; it was night; What kept me from turning my eyes away from that little piece of black wood? I might have thrown it into the ashes, as I did throw my weapon. Ah! I felt it in my very heart, and I feel it now. What wretches men must be who can scoff at something which can save a life! What matters the name, the creed, the form? is not all that is good holy? How can any one dare to touch God?"

As the day begins to break he leaves the room, disturbing as he passes a dress of Brigitte's, from which falls a folded but not sealed paper. It is a letter addressed to Mr Smith, the young man who had brought Brigitte her letters from home, and who had been the cause of Octave's last fit of jealousy. This is the final touch, and an immediate separation is now the only resource.

The last scene of the story takes place in the Palais Royal, where Octave and Brigitte go together to a

jeweller's shop before they part, choose similar rings and exchange them. They then take their last repast together, and after the meal the following conversation ensues:—

"*Brigitte.* Octave, if you should be mistaken?

Octave. No, dear friend, be sure of that, I am not mistaken. You must suffer much, perhaps for a long time, I for ever; but we shall both be relieved from it—you by time, I by God.

Brigitte. Octave, Octave! are you sure you are right?

Octave. I cannot think, dear Brigitte, that we can forget each other; but I think that at this moment we cannot pardon each another—and yet that is what must be brought about at any cost, even that of never seeing each other again.

Brigitte. Why should we never see each other again? Why not some day? you are so young (*with a smile*). When you love again we may meet without danger.

Octave. No, my dear; for I must tell you I can never see you again without loving you. May he to whom I intrust you, to whom I give you, be worthy of you! Smith is brave, good, honest: yet whatever love you may have for him, you know that you still love me, for were I to stay here, or ask you to go away with me, you would consent."

Brigitte acknowledges the truth of what he says, and Octave gently adds that this is the very reason why they must never see each other again. She gives him a lock of her hair, and they part. Shortly after, Octave leaves the country, thanking God that out of three people who have suffered by his act, only one remains unhappy.

The weakest part of the 'Confession' is undoubtedly the conclusion: the bathos of the man whose mental struggles we have watched, whose life in its alterna-

tions of happiness and content and the miseries of continual doubt and cynical contempt of the world has kept our attention so long, yielding at last to such an ending and consoling himself for the destruction of his life by a philosophical platitude, is so unnatural that we are forced to conclude that the author, as sometimes happened in his other works, saw the impossibility of keeping up the strain any longer, and caught at the first method which occurred to him of cutting the knot. The inspiration seems to fail, the struggles of the principal actors to become monotonous, until it all fades out into a settlement which leaves us wondering whether this is really the end of the story, or if Brigitte and Octave are destined to meet again.

Of the *Nouvelles*, the shorter stories of de Musset, the two best known are perhaps 'Le Fils du Titien,' which was the author's own favourite, and 'Mimi Pinson,' as illustrating a chapter in French life of which English people know little. While de Musset was studying the traditions of the Italian painters for the story of André del Sarto, he was much struck by a tale concerning the son of Titian, brought up by the painter in his own studio, and who produced one work only, the portrait of his mistress, but that work a masterpiece. This story is a curious study of one of those young men so beloved by and attractive to the poet, in whom fancy, imagination, fine sentiment and feeling, and a determined disinclination to use these gifts for anything but the satisfaction of a caprice, unite to form a character scarcely more delightful to the dreamer than exasperating to the serious looker-on, especially

when that looker-on is one deeply interested in the honour and reputation of the ever-disappointing yet ever-captivating hero. In this case the Mentor who takes charge of the young man's career, and endeavours to force him tenderly into the path of glory, is a young and beautiful lady, whose high birth forbids her to marry the young artist, who, though the son of Titian, of whom all Venice was proud, was yet not inscribed on the Libro d'Oro, and unfit to take the hand of a Loredano. The manners of the time, however, did not forbid the lovely Beatrice to devote herself to the gay and handsome prodigal, in whom all the fine endowments of genius lay dormant, lulled to sleep by indolence, indifference, and caprice, and the charms of an easy life. The careless Pippo cared nothing for fame, and he had no need of money, his father, who had loved both almost too well, having left him with a fine fortune, and a familiarity with the best works of the age, which probably had also its share in making all effort disagreeable to him. He was thus idling away his life, hearing with indifference that the only picture he had as yet finished had been burned, and seeing with careless contempt a distant relative and inferior genius arrogate to himself the title of the Tizianello, when he was first brought face to face with Beatrice. Truth to tell, this was by no doing of his, but by the action of the lady herself, who took the matter in her own hands, so eager in her desire to amend the erring youth that she took very little heed of the proprieties (non-existent in Venice) as concerned herself. After many efforts to rouse him to serious work, and a mystification about an embroidered purse, which recalls the favourite incident already

largely treated by de Musset, Beatrice at last proposes that he should paint her portrait. The model is so beautiful, and the inducements so great, that Pippo consents, and by slow degrees paints a picture, very delightful to his sitter, but with which he is so little satisfied that he rubs out the lower part of the face, declaring that his hand is not capable of rendering it. "The glance and the smile," said he, "are two things most difficult to render: one must be inspired before one dares to attempt them." He is not in the least disappointed, however, as Beatrice is, but takes his failure with exasperating calm, driving the lady to the end of her resources. The author takes entirely the part of the indolent painter. "Under these extravagances there was a reasonable opinion," he says.

"In the history of the arts we are often told of the facility with which great artists execute their works, and many have been quoted who combined with their powers of labour much disorder and little industry. But there is no greater error than this. It is not impossible that an experienced painter, sure of his hand and of his reputation, may succeed in making a beautiful sketch in the midst of distraction and pleasure. Leonardo sometimes painted, it is said, with his lyre in his hand,—but the celebrated portrait of La Joconda was four years on his easel. In spite of the rare efforts, *tours de force*, which have been too much boasted of, it is certain that the truly beautiful is the work of time and withdrawal from the world, and that there is no true genius without patience."

Pippo is at last roused, however, though not by the spell of love. He goes one day into the convent of the Servites, where the false Tizianello, his cousin and supplanter, is painting; and after an encounter in which

he nearly brings down the scaffolding of the other and much more successful artist, comes home inspired by indignation and full of the fire of emulation. In less than an hour he finishes the portrait, making great changes in it, and accomplishing without a pause the points of which he had a little while before said that he was incapable of doing them justice, the glance and the smile of the beautiful creature before him. Beatrice is overwhelmed with pride and delight. The work is a masterpiece, and her mind flies forward to a future of fame and glory. She cannot sleep for happiness and hope. When, however, she comes to look at the picture in the morning, a chill falls over these hopes, for on a rock in the background there is written a sonnet, which had not been there before :—

"Beatrice Donato was the lovely name
Of her whose earthly form was thus divine ;
In her white bosom dwelt a heart the same,
Of spotless mind her fair form was the shrine.

The son of Titian, that his love might be
Immortal, made this picture, love's own sign ;
Then laid his pencils down that none but she
Might ever by his hand thus live and shine."

And thus it came about that the true Tizianello, the inheritor of his father's genius, painted no more.

The story of 'Mimi Pinson' is perhaps the best known of de Musset's prose. It is an anecdote rather than a romance, and while it gives us a sketch of the best aspect of the Parisian grisette, the quality which is seldom altogether wanting in her class, the kindness which they

show to each other in time of need, and their readiness to sacrifice their own comfort to succour a friend, it is at the same time a revelation of the presence here and there of a young judge and censor among the students themselves, who demands a little more from life than the riot which so often fills its earliest days. The story opens with a slight but delicate sketch of this serious youth, in whose life the ordinary disorders have no place, and who regards with a sort of moral horror the light companions who occupy the leisure of his comrades. By a stratagem, his friend Marcel beguiles Eugène into his rooms, where a jovial supper is going forward, the chief entertainment at which is derived from the gaiety and freedom of two grisettes, one of whom is Mimi Pinson, a young person of great freedom of speech, but not, it appears, of the same freedom of morals which distinguishes her companions. "Mademoiselle Pinson was not," says de Musset, "precisely what you would call a pretty woman."

"There is a great difference between a pretty woman and a pretty grisette. If a pretty woman, recognised as such in the talk of Paris, was to put on a little cap, a cotton gown, and a black silk apron, she would, no doubt, be considered a pretty grisette. But if a grisette were to get herself up in a bonnet, a velvet mantle, and a dress from Palmyre [the Worth of the period], she is by no means sure to turn out a pretty woman. On the contrary, she will most likely have the air of a cloak-stand, and that will be all that she deserves. The difference consists in the conditions in which they live, and, above all, in that bit of rolled cardboard, covered with stuff, and called a bonnet, with which ladies think fit to surround their head, like the blinkers on a horse. . . . However that may be, a little cap authorises a *retroussé* nose,

which in its turn requires a largish mouth, and a round face for a frame. A round face demands brilliant eyes, the darker the better, and with long eyelashes; hair unimportant, as the black eyes make up for anything. Such a picture is evidently far from beauty in the strict sense of the word. It is the piquant face, the monopoly of the grisette, which might look ugly in the cardboard frame, but to which the cap sometimes gives a charm, and makes it prettier than beauty."

This is the light-hearted, saucy, gay, and lively creature whom Eugène sees in his friend's rooms, who dances, sings, and talks with an *abandon* and amusing fluency which fill all but him with admiration, tells an absurd story of a trick played by her and some grisette friends of hers upon some students, which makes two of Marcel's guests look very uncomfortable, and then sings them a song which her comrades in the shop have made upon her, apologising in case they should think it too flattering:—

"Mimi Pinson's locks are fair,
In the world she is well known;
She has but one gown to wear,
Landerirette,
One cap alone.
The Grand Turk has many a robe and hood—
Heaven ruled hers thus, in this fashion
To keep her good.
It can't be pawned, that's understood,
This one dress of Mimi Pinson."

The madcap gaiety of her friend and herself, however, only disgust Eugène, who listens to all the nonsense with the greatest repugnance, and comes away sick at heart at the sight of such follies, and at the mad thoughtlessness of the girls who whenever they have money

squander it in the wildest extravagance, though well knowing that to-morrow they may be destitute. While he, thus musing, goes homeward, just before dawn, he sees a wretched creature, sick and miserable, creeping out of her house, scarcely able to drag herself as far as the post-box, in which she attempts to post a letter, but, unable to reach it, intrusts it to him to post for her. Eugène, anxious to get to the bottom of this mysterious life, opens the letter, which is an appeal from a woman in want and suffering to a former lover, signed by the heroine of Mimi's story. He hastens immediately to get a meal for her at a neighbouring restaurant, which necessitates a visit on his part to a benevolent money-lender, where he finds that his friend Marcel has preceded him. Eugène tells the reason of his need of money, and the misery of poor Rougette, adding an indignant outburst on the insensibility of the girls who had been able to spend the night laughing and singing, while their comrade was so miserable. "Your Mimi Pinson is a monster," he cries; "and your grisettes of whom you boast, with their shameless vices and their soulless friendship, there is nothing so contemptible in the world."

The money-lender here interferes in defence of Mimi, and shows the friends her solitary dress suspended in his chamber of horrors. She has pledged it in the early morning, no doubt, for her friend's sake. Marcel is so much touched by this, that he redeems the dress and carries it off to restore it to its owner. On arriving at her house they are told that, according to her custom, she has gone to hear Mass, and going towards the church they meet her on her way back.

"She wore, instead of a dress, a cotton petticoat, half hidden under a green serge curtain, of which she had somehow or other made a shawl. With this singular equipment, which, however, being of dark colour, did not attract attention, were seen her comely head with its white cap, and her little feet shod in *brodequins*. She was wrapped so skilfully in her curtain, that it really looked like an old shawl, and the border was scarcely visible. In a word, she managed to please even in this frippery, and to prove once more that a pretty woman is always pretty."

The guess of Marcel proves true. As soon as Mimi has put on the recovered garment, she takes them both with her to see her secret. They go straight to Rougette's lodgings, and there on the table, beside the remains of Eugène's chicken, lie some bits of cake which Mimi had taken from Marcel's supper the night before, and the four francs which she had got by pawning her dress.

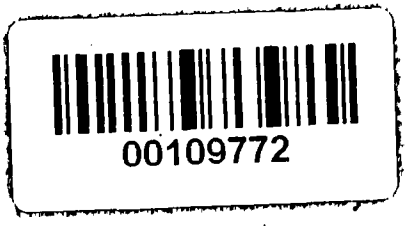
The young men go away together talking over the singular mixture of good and evil thus revealed; and Eugène, in a burst of enthusiasm, has just declared that he will go back to them and exhort them to repent and change their ways. As he speaks they pass Tortoni's, and through the window they see two women eating ices, one of whom waves her handkerchief, the other bursts out laughing. "If you really want to speak to them, there they are," says Marcel; "the letter has evidently been successful."

This sudden touch of surprise at the end is entirely characteristic of de Musset—an expedient which he has employed again and again in his dramas: and it enhances the effect of the curious exhibition thus presented to us of these sadly draggled butterflies of Parisian life—poor

insects of a day, heedless as any moth, unteachable, unreasoning, not without moments which show a tender and faithful heart, yet capricious as the wind, and as little capable of being guided or restrained.

Musset has left behind a dozen or so of other works in prose, of which it is scarcely necessary to give any account. Several of them, such as 'Croiselles,' might work into very graceful little drawing-room dramas; but they are so much less remarkable than his more characteristic works, that few readers at the present day will care to dwell upon them. His perception of character was penetrating and true, but his hand was held by the different conditions of prose narrative, and it is not by any of these that his name will be permanently known.

END OF ALFRED DE MUSSET.



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Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 02 July, 2018